



Factors that Account for Good Academic Performance among Children from Single-Parent Homes of Adventist Senior High School, Kumasi, Ghana

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ABSTRACT

Literature on the factors that account for good academic performance among children from single-parent homes remains scarce. This study examined the factors that account for good academic performance among children from single-parent homes at Adventist Senior High School in Bantama, Kumasi. The study adopted the qualitative approach and the case study design. Ten teachers, ten single parents, and ten students from single-parent homes were purposively sampled and interviewed. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis. Within the frame of Cognitive Development Theory and John Bowlby's Attachment Theory, the findings revealed that single parents play roles by visiting their children in school, providing them with educational needs, advising their children, and arranging extra classes for their children to enhance their academic performance. It was also revealed that teachers provided counseling services to students and encouraged and motivated them to learn. Findings also show that environmental factors, social media, and students' IQ levels are other factors accounting for the good academic performance of students from single-parent homes. The study concludes that apart from the significant role of teachers, environmental factors, students' IQ level, and social media, single parents can push their children to perform well in school when they are financially capable and well-determined. The study recommends that single parents participate in school committee activities that are more concerned with their children's academic well-being than other school development initiatives. We also recommend that single parents provide their children with smartphones so they can benefit from social media and improve their studies.

INTRODUCTION

The ideal type of family has traditionally been one in which children live with both parents. However, in some cases, children would have to live with a single parent. It is a global phenomenon. This occurs when events like as divorce, separation, death, and so forth occur. According to Salami and Alawode (2000), single parenting is the result of many forms of separation, including divorce. Furthermore, having children out of wedlock or the death of one spouse forces a single parent to take on these responsibilities. Regardless of what triggered the scenario, single parenting has a number of negative consequences for children in a variety of areas, including schooling. When both parents are together, it indicates that the child will receive the most care. However, when one parent is absent in a child's life, a void is formed since that child loses the support that would have been provided by that parent. According to Nyarko (2007), children who have experienced separation, divorce, or death perform poorly academically.

Numerous studies have been conducted to investigate the impact of single parenting on students' education and academic achievement at various levels. In a study on the effects of single parenthood on the academic performance of students in basic schools in Yamoransa Circuit, within the Mfantseman Municipality in Ghana's Central Region, Owusu-Ansah (2017) discovered that most students in single-parent homes are supervised by their siblings when learning at home. The study also found that the main impact of single parenting on students' academic performance was due to single parents failing to provide all of the books their children require on time (Owusu-Ansah, 2017). This assertion by Owusu-Ansah is consistent with the findings of several other similar research. Chukwuemeka (2018) conducted one of these studies in Nigeria. The author concludes that children from broken homes experience emotional destabilization, negative social disposition, poor moral upbringing, parents' laxity in assisting and guiding them in academic activities, insufficient sexuality education, financial strain in providing for academic activities from single parents, and no attention and needed time and is provided for the children's academic welfare. These factors have a negative impact on their school work and performance.

Researchers in the United States have regularly discovered consequences of single-parent families on children's academic attainment. For example, after reviewing research results from enormous longitudinal data sets, Zill (1996) discovered that students from nuclear intact families did the highest academically, whereas students from alternative family types such as stepparent and single-parent homes performed poorly. Children nurtured in single-parent households are more likely to fall short of their full potential. However, students from stepparent families performed similarly to those from single-parent families (Sander, 1996). Similarly, Han and Huang (2000) discovered in their study of college attendance and educational expenses in Taiwan that children from single-parent homes attended college at a rate that was less than those from intact families.

A study conducted by Mrinde (2014) on the challenges that students with single parents face in obtaining secondary school education in Kinondoni Municipal discovered that the challenges that single parented students face are not only numerous but also self-contradictory. They are complicated because no single obstacle stands by itself and cannot be explained without reference to the others. As a result, the issues identified were economic difficulty, a lack of parental affection, a lack of monitoring and supervision, a lack of guidance and counseling, and socializing. It was also discovered that they have had an impact on single-parented students' educational success, as they have low academic performance, poor attendance, drop out of school, and engage in negative behaviors. The study recommends that, students of single parent who are experiencing economic hardship should be recognized so that the government can assist them with paying their children's fees.

Several studies (Etsey et al., 2004; Abudu & Fuseini, 2013; Chowa et al., 2012) on the relationship between parental involvement in the learning process and students' academic performance in selected schools in Ghana revealed that low-income, teacher attitudes toward parents, parents' ignorance and inadequate level of education, individual commitments to work, and ineffective communication between teachers and parents were factors hindering parents' involvement in the learning process. Poor academic performance of pupils in the Ghanaian education system has been attributed to many factors by educationists, politicians, and the government. Sometimes, teachers are the first to be accused when there is a fall in academic standards while nothing or very little is said about other factors such as single parenting, perceived parental involvement, and the child's academic motivation. In Ghana, the government has implemented effective strategies to encourage students enrollment, daily attendance, and retention in basic schools across the country, in an effort to achieve the goals of the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) policy and the Education for All (EFA) agenda. These measures include the provision of instructional resources, school uniforms, the school nutrition program, and the implementation of a capitation stipend per child enrolled. The government has also developed outstanding teacher awards and other teacher career development programs to encourage teachers to provide quality education to their students (Ministry of Education, Science, and Sports [MOESS], 2007).

Despite the government's remarkable successes, the education system continues to face numerous obstacles. According to ISSER (2008), many children are failing to satisfy the minimum learning needs and develop basic abilities and competencies. Single parenting is not a conspiracy theory in Ghana. Several authors' studies, like Abudu and Fuseini (2013) and Chowa et al. (2012), demonstrated that single-parenting is a key cause of poor academic achievement among Ghanaian students. According to Abudu and Fuseini (2013), the majority of students from two-parent households have their parents assist them with their academic work, as opposed to those from single-parent families. In similar fashion, Chowa et al. (2012) discovered that married parents

in Ghana are more likely to participate in their children's schooling than single parents.

It is generally accepted that children should be brought up in a home where both parents are living together. Unfortunately, this is not always the case and this poses lots of problems for society and for children as several studies (Etsey et al., 2004; Abudu and Fuseini, 2013; Chowa et al.; 2012, Fotoh, 2021) conclude that students who go through separation, divorce, or the loss of one of their parents do not necessarily do exceptionally well or achieve significantly. They also risk falling short of their maximum potential. Little academic attention has been given to this minority, probably because they may not be significant. However, it is important to seek answers to certain questions regarding such children. The issue under investigation is that, as studies reveal, most students from single-parent households perform poorly in their academics; therefore, there could be valid reasons why the minority children from single-parent homes perform well academically.

Contrary to the conclusions of multiple studies, we observed that some adolescents grew up in single-parent households but scored well academically. This observation sparked curiosity in determining which factors contributed to such students' high academic success. Could it be related to the actions of the single parent, the teachers, or the child? To discover answers to this question, we looked into what factors contributed to the high academic performance of Adventist Senior High School students from single-parent homes in Bantama, Kumasi.

This study is significant in several ways. The findings are crucial for policymakers and practitioners, especially within the Ministry of Education and Ghana Education Service (GES), as they highlight effective strategies and support mechanisms that can be integrated into policy frameworks to enhance the academic outcomes of students from diverse family backgrounds. This study contributed significantly to the literature on children's academic performance. For example, since there is little information on factors that account for good academic performance of children who do better under single parents, this research unearthed such factors which would be beneficial to other scholars who want to study issues related to single parenting and academic performance of school children. It contributes to a deeper understanding of the positive influences that can drive academic success in this demographic, thereby challenging common stereotypes and providing a balanced perspective on the capabilities of students from single-parent homes. In addition, it is beneficial to any single parent who is worried about the trend of how children of single parents generally do not do well but would want his or her ward to do well academically. Such parents would find this research useful. Moreover,

Research Questions

This study answered the following research questions:

1. What roles do single parents whose wards perform better academically play in their children's education?
2. What roles do teachers play in the academic performance of children from single-parent homes?

3. What other factors account for good academic performance by students from single-parent homes?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study employed two main theories to explain the phenomenon under study. These are Vygotsky's cognitive development theory and John Bowlby's Attachment theory.

Vygotsky's cognitive development theory

According to Vygotsky's cognitive development theory (1978), parents play an important role in the process of creating meaning in social interactions. Vygotsky argues that cognitive development is driven by social interactions and guided learning within the zone of proximal development, in which children and their partners co-construct knowledge. According to Vygotsky, the environment in which children grow up influences how and what they believe (Roth & Lee, 2007). He also believed that certain higher functions were developed by direct interaction with important persons in a child's life. Vygotsky stated that children are born with basic intellectual capacities known as "elementary mental functions." Through interaction within the sociocultural environment, these eventually evolve into more sophisticated and effective mental processes, which Vygotsky refers to as 'higher mental functions.' (MCLEOD, 2020). Each culture offers its children with intellectual adaptation skills that enable them to perform basic mental processes more successfully and adaptively.

Vygotsky defines tools of intellectual adaptation as methods of thinking and problem-solving skills that children internalize through social contacts with more experienced members of society. For example, biological reasons impair young children's memory. However, culture influences the type of memory approach that one develops. For example, in Western culture, children learn note-taking to enhance memory, but in pre-literate tribes, new tactics must be developed, such as tying knots in a string to remember, carrying pebbles, or repeating ancestor names until enormous numbers can be repeated (Mcleod, 2020). Vygotsky sees cognitive activities, even those performed alone, as being influenced by the beliefs, values, and tools of intellectual adaptation of the culture in which a person develops, and hence socio-culturally determined. As a result, the instruments for intellectual adaptability differ amongst cultures. He used memory as an example.

Vygotsky argues that young children are naturally curious and actively involved in their own learning, as well as the discovery and development of new concepts/schemas. However, Vygotsky emphasized social aspects to the development process. According to Vygotsky (1978), social interaction with a skilled tutor facilitates most of the child's learning. The tutor may model behavior and/or give vocal directions to the children. Vygotsky describes this as cooperative or collaborative communication. The child attempts to comprehend the actions or instructions given by the tutor (usually a parent or teacher). As the child gains competence, the father permits him to work more

independently. According to Vygotsky, cooperative or collaborative discussion enhances cognitive development and helps people assimilate information, which they then use to control or manage their performance. Through this collaboration, adults transfer their culture's intellectual adaptation tools to children (McLeod, 2020). One of the reasons why a child from a single-parent home may not perform to their full potential is the absence of a parent to guide, discipline, direct, model, and instruct (Rothstein, 2004). According to Vygotsky, the development of the mind is the interweaving of the biological development of the human body and the appropriation of the present cultural, ideal, or material legacy to coordinate people with one another and with the physical world.

Furthermore, Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development implies that the social world shapes how children think. Vygotsky (1978) felt that children learn better when their learning is supported at the appropriate moments and when their caregiver assists them in learning new tasks. However, when children nurtured in single-parent households are left alone for extended periods of time or in the care of uninvolved caretakers, their academic abilities are not completely maintained (Knox, 1996). The study used Vygotsky's cognitive development theory, which views parents as collaborators in their children's lives as caregivers and academic boosters. Vygotsky felt that interactions with informed partners are the primary means by which children learn. According to Brooks (2011), cooperative and assistive parenting styles lead to increased cognitive skills and motivation to learn, including practical skills such as writing and building, as well as ethical and problem-solving behavior. Additionally, the theory emphasizes teachers' teaching methods for proper knowledge acquisition in children. Vygotsky felt that everything was learned on two levels. Interaction with others is the first step, followed by integration into the individual's mental structure. "Every function in a child's cultural development appears twice: first on the social level and then on the individual level; first between people (interpsychological) and then within the child (intrapsychological)." This applies equally to voluntary attention, logical memory, and concept development. All higher functions emerge from actual relationships between persons." (Vygotsky 1978, p. 57).

Constructivist teaching techniques represent a deliberate shift away from 'conventional, objectivist didactic models, memory-oriented transmission models' (Cannella & Reiff, 1994, cited in Surgenor, 2010, p. 1) and toward a more student-centered approach. Vygotsky's theory is employed in education today in the form of "reciprocal teaching," which improves students' ability to learn from text. This method involves teachers and students working together to learn and practice four critical skills: summarizing, questioning, clarifying, and predicting. The teacher's role in the process diminishes over time (McLeod, 2020). Furthermore, Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development in learners is related to instructional notions such as "scaffolding" and "apprenticeship," in which a teacher or more advanced peer structures or arranges a task so that a novice can complete it successfully. Cognitive development theory also contributes to the current interest in collaborative learning by stating that group

members should have varying degrees of ability so that more advanced peers can assist less advanced members in operating within their ZPD (McLeod, 2020).

John Bowlby's attachment theory

Attachment is a basic human need for a secure relationship between children and caregivers. A child psychiatrist John Bowlby gave the theory of attachment which clearly explains that how children and parent relationships emerges and how it influences the emotional and social development of the child. Four stages of attachment were designed by Bowlby. These stages begin from infancy. These stages are pre-attachment, attachment in making, clear-cut attachment, and formation of a reciprocal relationship. All these stages build a bond and this bond binds parents and children emotionally (Connor & Scott, 2007). Another three stages were described by the colleague of John Bowlby that are experienced when children are being separated from their caregivers. These stages are detachment, protest, and despair (Chapman et al., 2004). In the case of single parenting, where a parent is not able to build a stronger relationship, then there are higher chances that children will face some problems, they may suffer from psychological disorders, social difficulties, and irretrievable developmental consequences, such as decreased intelligence, increase anger and violent behavior (Connor & Scott, 2007; Chapman et al., 2004).

Attachment refers to an emotional link with another individual. Bowlby believed that children's early ties with their caregivers had a significant impact that lasted throughout their lives. He suggested that attachment keeps the infant close to the mother, increasing the child's chances of survival. Bowlby saw connection as the result of evolutionary processes. While behavioral theories of attachment stated that attachment was a learned process, Bowlby and others proposed that children are born with an inbuilt need to create relationships with their caregivers. Bowlby noticed that even feedings did not alleviate children's anxiety when away from their primary caregivers (Bowlby, 1982). Instead, he discovered that attachment was defined by specific behavioral and motivational patterns. When children are scared, they will seek out their primary caregiver for comfort and care (Cherry, 2019). Some factors influence how and when attachments form, including the possibility for attachment; children who do not have a primary caregiver, such as those raised in orphanages, may fail to acquire the trust required to create an attachment. Quality childcare; when caregivers respond swiftly and consistently, children learn to rely on those in charge of their care, which is a necessary basis for attachment (Cherry, 2019).

Children with single parents may have a more difficult life than children with two parents. Many studies have shown that single parenting has a significant impact on children's academic achievement (Etsey et al., 2004; Abudu and Fuseini, 2013; Chowa et al., 2012; Fotoh, 2021). Financial instability or a financial crisis is the most common concern for most single parents (Chapman et al., 2004). Furthermore, single parents rarely provide their

children with quality time, such as listening to their problems, recognizing their emotional and psychological needs, assisting them with their tasks, and inquiring about their studies (Ali & Soomar, 2019). The result is that students from such families may not perform to expectation as set by the school system since they will not be in the right mindset to perform educational tasks assigned to them.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted through the lenses of interpretivism paradigm and the qualitative approach. Kombo and Tromp (2006) define qualitative research as a type of research that entails describing the data acquired. It aims to describe and understand group behavior from the perspective of those being examined. Furthermore, this approach allows a researcher to connect specific features of behavior to a larger context. Additionally, the case study design was applied. This design was chosen because it strives to grasp the case in depth and in its natural setting, acknowledging its complexity and context, and having a holistic focus targeted at preserving and understanding the case's wholeness and unity (Punch, 2005).

We sampled 10 students, 10 parents and 10 teachers through the purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling, according to Amoah and Eshun (2014), is a type of sampling that involves selecting a sample from a subset of the population that is close at hand, or available and handy. In this type of sampling, the investigator just selects samples from those that he or she has convenient access to. Thus, 30 participants were selected from Adventist Senior High School. The semi-structured interview guide served as the primary data gathering instrument. The field interview was a face-to-face interview.

Data from this study was analyzed using thematic analysis, with themes formed from the data collected in response to the research questions. Thematic analysis is a form of qualitative analysis. It analyzes categories and presents data-related themes (patterns). It provides detailed illustrations of the data and addresses a wide range of topics through interpretations (Boyatzis, 1998). Thematic analysis is regarded as the most appropriate method for any study that attempts to find through interpretations. Lastly, ethics of confidentiality, anonymity, and informed consent were adhered to.

RESEARCH RESULT

This section presents and discusses the data from the study on the factors that account for good academic performance among children from single-parent homes.

Research Question One: What roles do single parents whose wards perform better academically play differently in their children's education?

The themes that emerged from the data include visiting children in school, provision of needs and learning materials, advising their children, and arranging tuition for students.

Visiting children in school

The interview indicates that single parents visit their wards in school. One participant stated:

“Well since, all my children, stay in school, I visit them to make sure everything is in order. I ask teachers to check up on them to make sure they don't lack anything to make sure their school life is worthwhile”.
[Maame Esi]

Another participant said:

“I make sure to check my children's reports, visit them and interact with their teachers to know their progress in school”. [Kwame]

The result implies that when parents visit their children in school, they will be able to interact with teachers and know the problems of their wards and find solutions to mitigate such problems. According to Akhtar et al. (2020), teachers feel more at ease when parents pay unannounced visits to their classrooms. Interaction with parents will be critical to optimal achievement. It will provide parents the opportunity to witness things from the perspective of a teacher, and it will allow teachers to openly discuss with students' parents how they would like to engage.

Provision of needs and learning materials

Another theme that emerged from the study was the provision of needs and learning materials. The interviewees indicated that they provide educational needs for their wards. One respondent said:

“I provide my children with all their educational needs. I make sure that they take their studies seriously”. [Adjoa]

Another participant said:

“My child is now doing very well as compared to other levels. This is because; he forced me to pay for learning materials to facilitate his learning”. [Nana Yaa]

A third participant said:

“I make sure to help my children with their educational needs, even though I sometimes find it difficult to provide but still do them eventually”. [Eric]

A fourth participant said:

“My wards do not lack anything; they try as much as possible to learn hard. They pressure me to get all learning materials that will enhance them to perform exceptionally in their academic life”. [Ebenezer]

Interview with teachers attest to the fact that parents provide the needs of their wards by buying textbooks for them. Teachers indicate that parents do have time to check their wards report to get to know what to do to help. This implies that the relationship between teachers and parents is crucial. Parents can communicate with teachers to know what books to buy. The parent-teacher relationship can be strengthened through the teacher-parent interaction. Because teachers collaborate closely with parents on educational issues, the teacher-parent relationship is crucial to students' achievement and overall school improvement (Kayombo, 2017). Rugutt and Chemosit (2005) opine that learning resources make students effective in class.

Advising their children

Single parents indicate that they do advise their children to enable them to succeed in school.

One parent said:

"I advise my children to learn hard in order for them to pass their exams to enable them to continue their education". [Owusuwaa]

Another parent said:

"I always advise my children to take their studies seriously and also advise them to stay away from bad friends". [Peter]

Another participant said:

"I give them advice that their life is in their own hands do they should focus on their studies. I advise them about the kind of people they should be able to associate themselves with. This should be able to help them in their life". [Akua]

When parents assist teachers with their children's academic education, the children tend to perform better. It is well acknowledged that if students are to maximize their academic performance in school, they will require the full support of their parents. Thus, parental participation is a strong predictor of educational quality (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). Thus, rendering advice to their wards, especially on studying and peer relations are significant to the betterment of students' good performance.

Arranging tuition for students

The interview revealed that parents were able to arrange classes for their wards. One participant said:

"When my daughter has a problem in any subject, I go to her school to negotiate with her teacher to help her". [Owusuwaa]

Another single parent said:

"I make them do extra classes and go to vacation classes too. I check their exam score and report to know if they have problems in any subject".
[Kwame]

A third respondent recounted:

"My child is doing well in school because the report I get is always good, my child always forces me to allow her to do extra classes and she always does vacation classes". [Nana Yaa]

It is apparent that single-parents play critical roles in a children's life, and so a parent's participation with a child impacts the child's destiny because parents are children's first teachers (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). According to research findings, parents' attitudes, conduct, and activities, such as arranging for extra lessons for their children, have a favorable impact on academic attainment (Kayombo, 2017).

Research Question Two: What roles do teachers play in the academic performance of children from single-parent homes?

The themes that emerged from this category include organizing classes for students, giving students homework to do, advising and providing guidance and counseling services, encouraging and motivating students from single-parent homes, and giving information to parents about their wards.

Organizing classes for students

The teachers indicate that they organize classes for students from single-parent homes. This according to them helps them improve upon their performance. The teachers indicate that they organize such classes for free.

A teacher said:

"I speak to parents to help their wards by doing classes to help them in their academics. I organize free classes for such students, especially for those who do not have money". [Richmond]

The result implies that the social support given to students by teachers will help students from single-parent homes to compete academically with those from two-parent homes. Johnson (2017) believes that teachers' welcoming, caring, and trusting relationships with their pupils can motivate children to learn. According to research on the relationship between students' perceptions of social support and autonomy support from their teachers and self-regulated learning and achievement, the relationship with their teachers has an impact on students' learning, performance in school, and social and emotional well-being (Schuitema et al., 2016).

Giving students homework to do

The interviews revealed that teachers assign works for students from single-parent homes to do. This helps them improve upon their studies.

One parent respondent recounted:

“Teachers are really doing well their best if only children allow them. They check on them advise and also guide them in their studies. They sometimes give them assignment, mark and correct them”. [Ebenezer]

Gwija (2016) noted that the habit of giving students homework to do is more likely to help them perform better in school.

Advising and providing guidance and counseling services

Interviews with participants show that teachers provide students from single-parent homes with counseling services.

A teacher said:

“What I do is that I give them the chance to approach me with their problems. I give them counseling and advise them not to make their situation to stand in their way to success”. [Jane]

One single parent recounted:

“Teachers are doing their best to help students who make themselves available. They give a lot of advice and also guide them to answer question with satisfaction”. [Peter]

Another parent said:

“Teachers as second parents help the students by teaching them the various subjects. They guide and counsel the students. They make sure that the students’ welfare is assured”. [Maame Esi]

Many students struggle to build positive study attitudes and habits. Guidance is a component that helps a student develop his study attitudes and habits and is closely related to academic accomplishment. Students who were effectively guided by their parents performed excellently on the tests. The direction provided by the teachers also has an impact on the student's performance. The direction provided by teachers and parents has an indirect impact on children's performance. It has been observed that teacher effects on student fulfillment in class are even greater than those for test-based outcomes (Blazer, 2002).

Encouraging and motivating students from single-parent homes

Interviews with participants further revealed that students from single-parent homes can perform well in school because teachers encourage and

motivate them. They check their reports and ask them what is wrong if they perform poorly in school.

One teacher said:

“Some of the students are more determined that even though a parent may not be around parents may not be around to control them, they still make efforts to learn hard. They also do not allow the absence of one parent to affect them in any way. This makes me encourage and motivate them”. [Frank]

From the interviews, teachers do well to encourage and motivate students. They indicated that teachers read their body language as well as facial expressions. Teachers encourage their pupils to study by giving them positive feedback in order to improve their competence. Giving feedback allows pupils to develop control over their own learning and a sense of confidence in their abilities (Ferlazzo, 2015). Teachers who provide students feedback on their efforts grant them the impression that with hard work, they can complete assignments and do well (Theobald, 2006). While children may have a natural drive to learn, extrinsic support from the teacher has a substantial impact on their learning. The teacher's responsibility in motivating students includes, but is not limited to, establishing a favorable learning atmosphere. According to Johnson (2007), the teacher's involvement in fostering students' autonomy, relevance, and relatedness to the topic boosts motivation to learn.

Giving information to parents about their wards

The interview revealed that teachers play a vital role by giving information to single parents about their wards.

One single parent recounted:

“To me, teachers are doing exceptionally well, because they do check on them (her wards) for me by giving me information about my girls”. [Adjoa]

The result implies that, there should be cooperation between teachers and parents. The results are in line with studies by Akhtar et al. (2020) who discovered that teachers communicate with parents about what happens at school, and parents notice when their children obtain poor grades. Teachers believed that parental involvement in learning is important for students; parents can easily communicate with teachers, and when teachers speak with students' parents, teachers can educate and understand learners. Teachers and single parents must cooperate. If there is early positive contact between parents and instructors, subsequent negative instances are unlikely to alter the initial good perception (Miron, 2004).

Research Question Three: What other factors account for good academic performance by students from single-parent homes?

The themes that emerged from the study include, self-motivation and determination environmental factors, students IQ level, and use of social media.

Self-motivation and determination

Self- motivation emerged from the data collected as one of the major factors that account for good academic achievement of students from single-parent homes.

A teacher said:

“I think it is the children who motivate themselves; also, since they have their own goals they really work hard to help them to achieve it. They also look up to their role models to push them to be like them or even become better persons”. [Emmanuel]

Another parent respondent also said:

“My ward wants to achieve greater height in education to make me proud and to have positive impact on the other children from single-parent homes. I think this is why my child performs well”. [Eric]

A third respondent indicated:

“She (her ward) wants to make a change in the family, and also become a good example of her siblings”. [Adjoa]

A student said:

“Usually those with 1st to 3rd positions are appreciated by teachers; I try to learn hard to be liked”. [Kofi]

Interviews with other students revealed that students from single-parent homes are naturally motivated by themselves. As a result, they visit the library and study hard. Blazer (2016) noted that students’ self-efficacy happiness and behavior in class contribute to academic success.

Environmental Factors

Interviews with participants in the study showed that environmental factors play a major role in making students from single-parent homes perform well.

A teacher said:

“the environment they interact is responsible for their success. The classroom learning environment full of learning activities and materials helps improve their success”. [Serwaa]

One single parent recounted:

"I think environmental factors help him (her ward) to learn extra hard."
[Peter]

Another parent said:

"To me, the environment he (the son) finds himself plays a major role in his academic excellence". [Ebenezer]

Interview with the children from single-parents' home revealed that they study with their peers and also ask questions in class.

One student said:

"I ask questions in class for better understanding and teachers help me a lot. I also study with friends and do personal studies at dawn." [Ama]

Another student said:

"I solve past questions with my friends who are equally good in class".
[Nelson]

According to Chemosit (2004), the learning environment is critical in assisting students in achieving high performance. Rugutt and Chemosit (2005) conducted a study to investigate the degree to which institutional and individual learning environment elements influence academic accomplishment. Factors in and out of the classroom learning environment were investigated to see if they influence students' academic progress. It was demonstrated that crucial features of the learning environment can provide a solid foundation for improving the quality of teaching and learning for students in educational settings.

Students IQ Level

Teachers are also of the view that students' IQ level is a major factor in improving the performance of students from single-parent homes. Intelligence is a concept that has had a positive effect on everyone's lives in many aspects. It is responsible for academic performance and, ultimately, personal achievement. It enables us to overcome life's obstacles and emerge victorious. Chandra and Azimmudin (2013) found that intelligence influences a student's academic progress. The child with a high IQ performs better academically than the child with an average IQ. The high-IQ child will have greater grasping capability, memory, recall, and understandability than the average child. As a result, his academic performance will improve. A bright child will perform well and demonstrate good performance.

The use of social media

Some participants view social media as one of the factors accounting for the good performance of children from single-parent homes.

A teacher said:

“The stories and information they hear and read on social media plays a key role to help them perform well in their studies”. [Gifty]

Thus, single parents must offer their children with smartphones to help them learn. In their study, Leach and Ortia (2009) (quoted in Kolan & Dzandza, 2018, p. 8) concluded that student use of social media boosts learning motivation, provides tailored course material, and fosters collaborative abilities. Yunus and Salehi (2012) agreed that using social media helped students increase their vocabulary, enhance their writing skills, and reduce their spelling mistakes. In fact, as an educational tool, social media enhances learning by allowing students and teachers to engage in novel and engaging ways, fostering flexible modes of learning. Indeed, social media has considerably facilitated learning in the twenty-first century.

Cognitive development theory stresses that social interaction forms the basis of cognitive development. Therefore, in the case of this study, the type and quality of connection between a child and their only parent become very important. The research findings that single parents visited their children at school, and provided them with educational resources and advice are consistent with the theory's view regarding guided learning in the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Also, teachers who arrange homework or guide students mirror the role of significant others as argued by cognitive development theory providing models of behavior and giving instructions to facilitate learning.

According to Bowlby, a healthy bond between the child and caregiver promotes emotional and social development. Within the framework of this theory, the fact that single parents provide quality time and support to their children is an attempt to foster safe attachment, which has a positive effect on academic attainment. As the findings also revealed, single parents participating actively in their wards' education through paying fees and guiding them shows the habits of nurturing secure attachments.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Single parents are more determined to see their wards succeed academically. Teacher encouragement and motivation, counseling services, and classes for children from single-parent homes accounted for good academic performance. Other factors such as environmental factors, students' IQ level as well as social media play major roles in making students from single-parent homes perform well. We recommend that single parents participate in school committee activities that are more concerned with their children's academic well-being than other school development initiatives. Also, single parents should provide their wards with smartphones to benefit from social media to improve upon their studies. Furthermore, at the Senior High level, single parents should be encouraged to participate actively in their children's learning and welcomed as volunteer partners. Parents and teachers should cooperate more in the learning process of students.

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