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INFLUENCE OF DIVORCE ON PUPILS' EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING AS PERCEIVED BY TEACHERS IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL IN MAIDUGURI METROPOLITAN COUNCIL LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF BORNO STATE

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the influence of divorce on pupils' emotional well-being as perceived by teachers in public primary schools in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council. The study employed correlational research design. The population of this study comprised of 2140 public primary school teachers in Maiduguri Metropolitan, while 327 teachers were selected as sample size. Self-develop instrument was used to collect data for this study. The instrument was tagged "Questionnaire on Influence of Divorce on Pupils' Emotional Well-being as Perceived by Teachers in Public Primary Schools in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (QIDPEWPTPPSMMC), which contained 14 items questionnaire rated on 4-point likert scale. The questionnaire was subjected to face and content validities by the experts in the Department of Physical and Health Education, University of Maiduguri, while Test-retest was used to determine the reliability coefficients of r=0.71 which adjudge the instrument reliable. . The result showed that that parental divorce negatively has influenced on pupils' emotional well-being as perceived by teachers in public primary schools in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC), this is because the Mean of most of the item exceeded the midpoint threshold of 2.5. The study concluded that parental divorce negatively

Keywords: Divorce, Emotional Well-Being, Perceived, Teachers, Public Primary School

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has influenced on pupils' emotional well-being as perceived by teachers in public primary schools in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC). It was recommended that Effective communication strategies that foster support for children from family dissolution should encourage between teachers, pupils and parents..

Introduction

Divorce has become an increasingly prevalent phenomenon in contemporary society, with far-reaching implications for children's development and well-being. The dissolution of parental marriage represents a significant life stressor that can profoundly impact children's emotional, social, and academic functioning, particularly during the formative primary school years when children are developing crucial emotional regulation skills and social competencies (Amato, 2010). Primary school teachers occupy a unique vantage point in observing and understanding the emotional consequences of parental divorce, as they interact with children daily in educational settings where behavioral and emotional changes often manifest most visibly. Every year, over a million children throughout the world suffer due to parental divorce and negatively affect children's social adjustment, self-concept, behavioral disorder, and psychological development (Amato, 2001; Cartwright, 2006; Uphold-Carrier & Utz, 2012). Research indicates lower chances of completing formal education in the divorced family child, and parental separation reduces the cognitive development and educational performance (Riggio & Valenzuela, 2011).

Research consistently demonstrates that children of divorced parents experience elevated levels of emotional distress compared to their peers from intact families. These emotional challenges may include increased anxiety, depression, anger, feelings of loss, and difficulties with self-esteem (Kelly & Emery, 2003). The emotional turmoil associated with parental separation can interfere with children's capacity to concentrate, participate in classroom activities, and maintain positive peer relationships. Teachers, as frontline observers of children's daily behavior and emotional states, are particularly well-positioned to identify and report on the emotional manifestations of family disruption in educational contexts (Størksen et al., 2005).

The significance of investigating teachers' perceptions of divorce's impact on pupils' emotional well-being stems from several considerations. First, teachers spend substantial time with children during critical developmental periods and can observe patterns of behavior and emotional expression that may not be apparent in brief clinical assessments or parental reports (Pedro-Carroll, 2005). Second, understanding teachers' perspectives can inform school-based interventions and support systems designed to assist children navigating parental divorce. Third, teachers' awareness and responses to children's

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divorce-related distress can significantly influence children's adjustment trajectories and academic outcomes (Trinder, 2009). Despite the growing body of research on divorce's effects on children, there remains a need for studies that specifically examine how educational professionals perceive and interpret these impacts within school settings. Teachers' observations provide valuable ecological validity, capturing real-world manifestations of emotional distress in naturalistic educational environments rather than controlled research settings. Moreover, teachers' perceptions may differ from those of parents or mental health professionals, offering complementary insights into how divorce affects children's functioning across different contexts (Lansford, 2009). 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). It is against this background that this study aimed to examine the influence of divorce on pupils' emotional well-being as perceived by teachers in public primary schools in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council. In view of this, the researcher asked the following question; what is the influence of parental divorce on pupils' emotional well-being as perceived by teachers in public primary schools in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council? And further tested its corresponding hypothesis which states that:

Ho_1: This is no significant relationship between parental divorce and pupils' emotional well-being as perceived by teachers in public primary schools in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC) based on gender

Ho_2: There is no significant relationship between parental divorce and pupils' emotional well-being as perceived by teachers in public primary schools in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC) based on marital status.

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Methodology

A correlational survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of this study comprised of 2140 public primary school teachers in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (Borno State Universal Basic Education Board Maiduguri, 2025), 327 teachers were selected as sample size using Krejcie & Morgan Table (1970).

Self-develop instrument was used to collect data for this study. The instrument was tagged "Questionnaire on Influence of Divorce on Pupils' Emotional Well-being as Perceived by Teachers in Public Primary Schools in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (QIDPEWPTPPSMMC). Section A deals with demographic information of the respondents (Gender, age, educational qualification, years of experience). Section B (QIDPEWPTPPSMMC) contains 15-items questionnaire. It is self-administered comprehensive that contains response mode of 4 point-likert-scale ranging from 4 = Strongly Agree (SA), 3 = Agree (A), 2 = Disagree (D), 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD). The scale has three dimensions and they observed emotional and behavioral changes in pupils from divorced families (item 1-5), severity and duration of emotional difficulties (item 6-10), factors influencing the emotional impact of divorce (item 11-15). The questionnaire was subjected to face and content validities by the experts in the Department of Physical and Health Education, University of Maiduguri (Dugdale et al., 2018). Test-retest was used to determine the reliability of the instrument by selecting 20 teachers from the school that was excluded from the study. The scores were then correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) to establish their reliability coefficients which yielded r= 0.71 which adjudge the instrument reliable.

Descriptive statistic of means and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions. The descriptive statistics were used to describe and summarize inform decisions based on data patterns of the research question (Montgomery, 2012). The decision rule is that any item with mean score of 2.50 and above will be regarded as negative influence; while item with mean score less than 2.50 will be regarded as positive influence (Olaitan, 1983). Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significant. PPMC is a valuable statistical tool for assessing the strength and direction of linear relationships between variables (*Triola, 2018*).

Table 1: Demographic Information of the Respondents

S/N	Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	**Gender**		
	Male	141	43.1%
	Female	186	56.9%
2.	Age		
	20-30 years	67	20.5%

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S/N	Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	31-40 years	91	27.8%
	41-50 years	115	(35.2%)
	51years and above	54	(16.3%)
3.	**Educational Qualification**		
	NCE/Diploma	127	38.8%
	Bachelor's Degree	190	58.1%
	Master's Degree	8	2.5%
	Ph.D	2	0.6%
4.	**Years of Experience**		
	1-5 years	45	13.8%
	6-10 years	67	20.4%
	11-15 years	107	32.7%
	16-20 years	16	5%
5.	**Current Grade Level**		
	Primary 1-2	93	28.4%
	Primary 3-4	111	34.0%
	Primary 5-6	123	37.6%

The teachers consist of 141 (43.1%) male and 186(56.9%) female. 67(20.5%) were between the ages of 20-30 years, 91(27.8%) were between the ages of 31-40 years, 115(35.2%) were between the ages of 41-50 years, 54(16.3%) were between the ages of 51years and above. The demographic information of these teachers also indicated that 127 (38.8%) had NCE/Diploma, 190 (58.1%) had Bachelor's Degree, 8 (2.5%) has Master's Degree, while 2 (0.6%) of them had Ph.D. The participants years of experience were as follows; 45(13.8%) had 1-5 years, 67(20.4%) had 6-10 years, 92(28.1%) had 11-15 years, 107(32.7%) had 16-20 years, while 16(5%) had 21 years and above experience. The current grade level of teaching indicated that 93(28.4%) of these teacher taught in Primary 1-2, 111(34.0%) taught in Primary 3-4, while 123(37.6%) of these teachers taught in Primary 5-6. The demographic information also indicated that 257(78.6%) were married while 70(21.4%) were single. This indicated majority of these teachers were married, and this will make them to know the likely problem pupils from divorce family faced.

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Results

Research Question One: What is the influence of parental divorce on pupils' emotional well-being as perceived by teachers in public primary schools in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council?

Table 1: Influence of parental divorce on pupils' emotional well-being as perceived by teachers in public primary schools in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council

SN	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1.	Pupils from divorced families display increased sadness and depression in the classroom.	45.0% (147)	34.6% (113)	13.8% (45)	6.7% (22)	3.1	Negative influence
2.	These pupils exhibit heightened anxiety during school activities.	42.5% (139)	31.5% (103)	15.3% (50)	13.8% (45)	3.0	Negative influence
3.	Pupils from divorced families show more anger and aggression towards peers.	30.9% (101)	29.4% (96)	21.7% (71)	18.0% (59)	2.7	Negative influence
4.	These pupils demonstrate low self-esteem compared to their peers.	33.9% (111)	30.3% (99)	21.7% (71)	14.1% (46)	2.8	Negative influence
5.	Pupils from divorced families frequently appear withdrawn and isolated.	33.6% (110)	40.1% (131)	21.7% (71)	4.6% (15)	3.0	Negative influence
6.	The emotional difficulties experienced by pupils from divorced families are severe enough to affect their academic performance.	36.4% (119)	32.7% (107)	9.2% (30)	21.7% (71)	2.8	Negative influence
7	Emotional problems in these pupils persist throughout the entire school year.	38.8% (127)	33.9% (111)	16.2% (53)	11.0% (36)	3.0	Negative influence
8.	Pupils from divorced families experience more intense emotional difficulties immediately after the divorce.	52.3% (171)	22.9% (75)	8.6% (28)	16.2% (53)	3.1	Negative influence

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SN	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
9.	The emotional impact of divorce on pupils is more severe than other family stressors.	46.8% (153)	29.7% (97)	17.4% (57)	6.1% (20)	3.1	Negative influence
10.	Pupils from divorced families require more emotional support than pupils from intact families.	59.6% (195)	22.9% (75)	11.6% (38)	5.8% (19)	3.3	Negative influence
11.	The level of conflict between divorced parents significantly affects pupils' emotional well-being.	41.3% (135)	37.6% (123)	13.1% (43)	8.0% (26)	3.1	Negative influence
12.	Pupils who maintain good relationships with both parents cope better emotionally.	61.5% (201)	31.5% (103)	4.6% (15)	2.4% (8)	3.4	Negative influence
13.	The economic situation after divorce influences pupils' emotional adjustment.	47.4% (155)	41.9% (137)	6.1% (20)	4.6% (15)	3.3	Negative influence
14.	Pupils who maintain good relationships with both parents cope better emotionally.	38.8% (127)	45.6% (149)	9.8% (32)	5.8% (19)	3.2	Negative influence
	Grand Mean					3.0	

Decision: above 2.5 is negative influence, below 2.5 is positive influence

Table 1 indicated the influence of parental divorce on pupils' emotional well-being as perceived by teachers in public primary schools in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council. The result showed that parental divorce negatively has influenced on pupils' emotional well-being as perceived by teachers in public primary schools in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC). This is because the Mean of most of the item were rated above 2.5.

HO_1: This is no significant relationship between parental divorce and pupils' emotional well-being as perceived by teachers in public primary schools in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC) based on gender

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Table 2:

Pearson Product Moment Coefficient of relationship between Parental Divorce and Pupils' Emotional Well-being as Perceived by Teachers in Public Primary Schools in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC) based on Gender.

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev	N	df	R	Prob	Decision
Male	1.27	0.541	141	325	1*	0.000	Rejected
Female	1.95	0.976	186				

Df =325, r=1, prob.= 0.000

Table 2 indicated that male have a mean of 1.27 and standard deviation of 0.541; also, Female have mean of 1.95, and standard deviation of 0.976. Correlation coefficient (r) value of 1 indicates a strong positive correlation between parental divorce and pupils' emotional well-being. The low p-value (0.000) suggests that this correlation is statistically significant, further supporting the rejection of the null hypothesis. This shows that the stated hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between parental divorce and pupils' emotional well-being as perceived by teachers in public primary schools in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC) based on gender, was rejected. Hence, there is significant relationship between parental divorce and pupils' emotional well-being as perceived by teachers in public primary schools in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC) based on gender (P<.05).

Ho_2: There is no significant relationship between parental divorce and pupils' emotional well-being as perceived by teachers in public primary schools in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC) based on marital status.

Table 3:

Pearson Product Moment Coefficient of relationship between Parental Divorce and Pupils' Emotional Well-being as Perceived by Teachers in Public Primary Schools in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC) based on Marital Status.

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev	N	df	R	Prob	Decision
Married	2.27	1.541	257	325	1*	0.001	Rejected
Single	1.95	0.376	70				

Df =325, r=1, prob. = 0.000

Table 2 indicated that married teachers have a mean of 2.27 and standard deviation of 1.541; also, single teachers have mean of 1.95, and standard deviation of 0.376. Correlation coefficient (r) value of 1 indicates a strong positive correlation between parental divorce and pupils' emotional well-being. The low p-value (0.001) suggests that this correlation is statistically significant, further supporting the rejection of the null hypothesis. This shows

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that the stated hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between parental divorce and pupils' emotional well-being as perceived by teachers in public primary schools in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC) based on marital status, was rejected. Hence, there is significant relationship between parental divorce and pupils' emotional well-being as perceived by teachers in public primary schools in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC) based on marital status (P<.05).

Discussion

This study assessed the influence of parental divorce on pupils' emotional well-being as perceived by teachers in public primary schools in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council. The result indicated that parental divorce negatively has influenced on pupils' emotional well-being as perceived by teachers. This is because the Mean and the Grand Mean of most of the item were rated above 2.5. This is in line with the study conducted by Robbers et al., 2012; Størksen et al., 2006, who found that parental divorce has a negative significant effect on children health and emotional wellbeing, psychological, social and poor academic performance. The results of this study corroborate the study of Mussarat, Muhammad, Nadia and Li, (2021), who explained that parental divorce has negative substantial effect on children, especially interactive behavior development. The pupils from divorced homes seem isolated, sad, shy, and anxious. They also discovered from their study that children from separated family's show irregularity in communication and physical actions. Mostly hit, push, and show annoyance behavior to their fellows. The result of this study also similar to the study of Strohschein (2005), who stated that most of the children from the divorce family show a higher level of psychological problem such as depression, anti-social behavioral and anxiety. The result of this study is also agree with a systematic review of conducted by Olusegun, Dike and Yahaya, (2026), they found that some divorced couples and their children experienced emotional psychological which lead to loneliness, depression and other challenging situations. The result of empirical study reveal that in real sense, most of children from divorce family struggle to cope with parental divorce, experiencing feelings of uncertainty, stress, anxiety, depression, or even psychological trauma, which can hinder their growth and development. Moreover, in reality, parents' divorce is a challenging event that have negative effects on a child's behavior, academic performance, and mental health which is related to this findings (Nerxhivan, 2023). Children of divorced parents generally have lower levels of self-efficacy, self-esteem, and social support, and less efficient coping styles. Follow-up studies show that children of divorce display more adjustment problems such as anxiety and depression, low well-being, and school problems in early and mid-adolescence (Størksen, Røysamb, Moum & Tambs, 2005).

Many studies confirmed that parental divorce is one of the most damaging life events a child can experience, and that its emotional consequences are not constant across genders. This is in line with the study of Haker (2005), who explained that children and adolescents from divorced families commonly experience a range of negative emotions including embarrassment, guilt, anger, sadness, despair, and grief. They often react with fear, aggression, and hostility toward others, tend to withdraw from friends and family, and experience decreased self-confidence and increased loneliness. This study also support the findings of Seifert & Hoffnung, 1997, who found that adolescents who had family alterations like divorce are most relentlessly affected and are much more likely to experience unhealthy family climates, display more disruptive behavior, and have poorer school achievement . Most adolescents are already insecure due to their changing cognitive, emotional, and physical development. Therefore, divorce can be extremely difficult for those who are concerned about being normal and finding their identity.

Similarly, this study indicated that there is significant relationship between parental divorce and pupils' emotional well-being as perceived by teachers in public primary schools in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC) based on gender (P<.05). The most stable result in the literature is that boys and girls express the emotional distress of parental divorce differently, a distinction framed around internalizing and externalizing behaviors. This is in line with the study of Hopper (1997), who posited that divorce was found to have gender-specific impacts: for boys, aggression was more common, while for girls, increased depression was more often reported. This is aligns with the study conducted within Nigeria and beyond Smith and Thompson (2022); Ame, Umuoighoro, Megbele and Ekurume (2026), parental divorce significantly influences the emotional well-being of male and female students. The result of this study also similar with the findings of Levkovich, Yatzkar and Shenaar-Golan, (2025), who posited that girls mostly experience higher levels of internalizing problems, such as anxiety and depression, compared to boys, with this disparity typically emerging during early adolescence and widening throughout this developmental period. Boys display higher externalizing scores than girls in earlier childhood, whereas girls show higher internalizing scores from around age 10 onwards.

There is significant relationship between parental divorce and pupils' emotional well-being as perceived by teachers in public primary schools in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC) based on marital status (P<.05). Studies constantly detects the intact, two-parent married family as the family structure most protective of children's emotional well-being. The result of this findings buttress the study of Anderson (2014), who discovered that nearly three periods of research evaluating the impact of family structure on the health and well-being of children demonstrates that children living with their married, biological parents consistently have better physical, emotional, and academic well-being.

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Compared to children with continuously married parents, children with divorced parents have more behavioral and emotional problems, obtain lower academic test scores, and have more problems with social relationships (Kleinschlömer & Krapf, 2023). This evidence firmly establishes that parental divorce, relative to marriage, is significantly related to diminished pupil emotional well-being.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the result showed that parental divorce negatively has influenced on pupils' emotional well-being as perceived by the teachers in public primary schools in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC).

Recommendations

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

1. Divorced parents should be advised to uphold active communication with their children and provide emotional support this will help them to minimize negative impact of separation mental wellbeing.
2. Management of the schools should create healthy support systems such as guidance and counselling services that will encourage and motivate pupils from divorce home to express their feelings
3. Effective communication strategies that foster support for children from family dissolution should encourage between teachers, pupils and parents.

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