

Psychosocial Influence of Polygamy on Access to Quality Education among Students in Public Secondary School in Obio/Akpor, Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract: *Poor quality education is an anathema and has devastating implications for the overall development of society. The study investigated polygamy and access to quality secondary education in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers state. Two research questions were posed and two null hypotheses formulated to guide the study. The descriptive survey design was used for the study. However, 398 students of 6 selected public secondary schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. The instrument for the study was a questionnaire titled 'Polygamy and Access to Quality Education Questionnaire' (PAQEQ) with the modified Likert 4-point scale. The instrument was validated and had a reliability index of 0.7. The research questions were answered using mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (SD) while z-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that polygamy has significantly influence on the emotional stability of students. Also, polygamy has significantly higher influence on access to schooling resources among secondary school students. Based on the findings, it was recommended that adequate plans towards children's education should be made so that they can start their education at early age and adequate care should be taken by parents towards reducing, if not completely eradicating the level of psychological trauma, tension or transfer of aggression among students from most polygamous homes.*

Keywords: Polygamy, Access to Quality Education, Students' Emotional stability and School resources

Introduction

Polygamy is as old as man especially in African setting. It is practiced by so many people in Obio/Akpor, Rivers state, Nigeria. Nigeria is one of the West African countries that polygamy is pronounced. Polygamy may not be adequately understood without looking at marriage, which is the starting point of family. According to Nwana-Nzewunwa, Girigiri, and Okoh (2007), "marriage is a union constituted between a man and a woman so that any child or children born within the union is or are the legitimate offspring of the parents". The children born in this union are to be groomed by their parents- socially, culturally, educationally, etc.

There are several types of marriage; namely, monogamy, polygamy, polyandry but the emphasis is on polygamy. Polygamy is viewed by Hornby (2006) as the custom or practice of having more than one husband (polyandry) or wife at the same time in a society where this is allowed. On the other hand, polygamy otherwise known as polygyny, is simply the marriage of one man to two or more women as his wives. This system of marriage is practiced by some Rivers people, including the educated elites and the uneducated, employed and unemployed, those living in the rural areas and those in the urban areas alike.

Marriage constitutes the family; hence there are monogamous, polygamous, single-parent families or homes. Family, according to Murdock (in Haralambos and Holborn, 2008) is a social group characterized by common residence, economic cooperation and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain socially approved sexual relationship, and one or more children, own or adopted of the sexually co-habiting adults.

However, the family is socio-economic groups whose members live together, work together for their livelihood and procreation. It plays a vital role in children's access to education and their overall upbringing. Students from polygamous families often perform poorer than those from monogamous homes as conducted by (Oyet, 2012). He revealed that students from polygamous and broken homes are often victims of emotional imbalance caused by psychological trauma. It was discovered that polygamy has implications for students' quality education and academic performance in institutions of learning particularly in secondary schools.

In recent times, having access to equal education is very important. Access to equal education simply means a situation whereby children from different homes or backgrounds have the opportunity to attain education of their choice. This implies that children, irrespective of family background, have access to quality education. Quality education, according to UNESCO (2007) in David (2014), is defined as making the abstract real and developing the capacities in individuals (students) and societies to work for sustainable development. Operationally viewed here, quality is connected with how good or bad something is, that is, its grade and level of excellence. Okebukola in Mohammed (2016) sees quality education as one where the learning environment is convivial for teachers and learners including teachers' motivation. However, one's family type influences one's access to quality education in society today; hence, polygamy could, in no small measure, influence students' access to quality education in Obio/Akpor local government of Rivers state.

Polygamy influences students' school attendance and participation. The National Policy on Education (2004) has it that education is an instrument 'par excellence' for effecting national development. However, most children from polygamous homes find it difficult to have access to quality education. This could be as a result of limited financial resources of parents, selection done in the course of sending children to school etc. In this regard, many students of school age fail to attain their educational dream.

Meanwhile, there is a general opinion that most students from polygamous families perform poorly academically. In fact, the increasing case(s) of academic failure among students is a menace that has stared both the government and other education stakeholders in the face. One of the major causes of this problem is simply the inability of most parents to send their children to schools with quality teachers and adequate facilities, non-provision of the essential learning materials, and so on. A situation whereby students are not adequately taken care of, their performance in all facets of life will be adversely affected. In this regard, Uwaifo (2013) conducted a study and found a significant difference between the academic performance of students from single-parent families, those from two-parent family structure and those from polygamous families. Cotton and Wikeland (2017) stressed that parental involvement and individual's experiences at home play a vital role in building the personality of the child and making the child what he is through school.

Furthermore, students from polygamous families often face the challenge of having access to extra educational support from parents. Access to extra educational activities implies hiring of lesson teachers, taking children to education excursions, buying computers for children etc. To a larger extent, students from polygamous families sometimes do not have this opportunity which adversely affects their pace of learning.

Statement of the Problem

The declining and dwindling quality of secondary school graduates in recent times is quite shocking and has given education stakeholders a lot of concern because the students' performance is far below expectations. Access to quality education especially by children from polygamous families has been a hard nut to crack. Secondary school does not only occupy a strategic position in the educational system in Nigeria; it is also the link between the primary and the tertiary levels of education. Poor quality education is an anathema and has devastating implications for the overall development of society. A large percentage of students especially those from polygamous homes who have access to education perform poorly because of inadequate learning materials at their disposal.

Although many scholars have written or conducted studies on how the foregoing challenges can be handled, the researchers are of the opinion that polygamy and its attendant dwindling effects on quality of education remains the bane or cause of the problem. More worrisome is the question of the ability of polygamists to meet up with the demands of education of their children or wards in terms of payment of school fees, provision of essential learning materials, hiring of home teachers and other forms of motivation. Therefore, the problem of the study is to investigate polygamy and access to quality secondary education in Obio/Akpor local government area of Rivers state. This forms the crux and/or thrust of the study.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the psychosocial influence of polygamy on access to quality education among students in public secondary school in Obio/Akpor. The study focuses on the following objectives. To:

1. Investigate the influence of polygamy on students' emotional stability in Obio/Akpor.
2. Ascertain the influence of polygamy on students' access to school resources in Obio/Akpor.

Research Questions

The following research questions emanate:

1. What influence has polygamy on students' emotional stability in Obio/Akpor?
2. To what extent does polygamy influence students' access to school resources in Obio/Akpor?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. There is no significant influence on students' emotional stability and polygamy among secondary school students in Obio/Akpor.
2. There is no significant influence on students' and teachers on the influence of polygamy on access to schooling resources among secondary school students in Obio/Akpor.

Influence of Polygamy on Students' Emotional Stability

Emotional stability simply means having stable emotions; being strong, steady and not changing. According to Hornby (2011), being emotional simply means one's feelings and one's ability to control them while stability is seen as a state of being stable or calm. Put together, emotional stability means having stable emotions; being strong, steady and resolute. Eje (2012) views emotional stability as the ability to remain calm, stable and steadfast in carrying out one's responsibility irrespective of any inherent challenges. However, he points out that students from polygamous families often have psychological and emotional challenges resulting from sad experiences such as absence of love, wrangling, rancour and neglect.

In regard to this, Agulanna (2015) remarks that because of feeling of neglect, some students are always ecophobic (fear of home) thereby returning home late after the day's activities. According to him, this occurs as a result of psychological trauma which culminates in emotional imbalance. Such students often get irritated over any issue that would have been resolved amicably. This is borne out of transfer of aggression; their performance in all spheres of life is affected. Egu in Asodike (2013) identifies stress as one of the conditions causing problem or shock to students from most polygamous families. According to her, stress is pressure, tension or worry resulting from problem in one's life. Stress causes academic failure among students not only of those from polygamous homes. Health and Information Publication (2005) defines stress as the emotional and physical strain caused by one's response to pressure from the outside world.

Nevertheless, Adebule (2004) asserts that research on this aspect has not been exhaustively looked into in Nigeria where the two types of family system is actively practised bearing in mind the intervening effects of high and low socio-economic status and the emotional stability of students which is the prerequisite to academic performance. Dienye (2012) contends that students from polygamous families are sometimes so aggressive, emotionally imbalance and very tetchy. This has a connection with what happens at home, where there is the survival of the fittest syndrome. They easily resort to force or coercion to get their set goals.

Furthermore, Hasan (2013) points out that students from polygamous families often get demoralized, depressed and suffer from amnesia (loss of memory) because of not being cared for and this affects the psychology of the students; their concentration being hindered. Salami (2015) agrees with Hasan (2013) as he contends that children from most polygamous homes are often not motivated or encouraged by their parents; not loved, which invariably weakens their spirit. Ntamu (2009), claims that some students from polygamous families have gone round the bend (become mad) at Utugwang in Obudu Local Government Area of Cross River State on account of their zeal to vigorously pursue formal education. They are often remote-controlled by the witches and wizards in their families. He points out, however, that the reverse is the case in monogamous families within the same place. Those who are not mad are either rendered confused or useless with diabolic manipulations. This situation negatively affects emotional stability of such students.

More often than not, there are conflicts, rancour and bitterness or unwholesome competition in polygamous families over the limited resources of parents. Although conflict is inevitable in bringing about desired changes, it leads to disintegration of any setting when it is not adequately or properly managed, which is obtainable in most polygamous homes. When there is conflict in the family things work in the wrong direction, bringing about imbalance in children's emotions. This, undeniably, affects their academic activities and every other aspect of human endeavour

Influence of Polygamy on Students' Access to School Resources

A resource, according to Hornby (2011) is something that can be used to help achieve an aim, especially a book, equipment, etc. that provides information for teachers and students. Students' access to school resources means students' possession of the essential learning materials which enhance understanding in the teaching-learning process. Ekahem (2009) points out that the number of wives or children a man may have does not count but what matters most is their upbringing. In modern times, one's greatness is not measured by the number of wives/children one has. The cost of child care and education makes it even more difficult; to adequately provide all the needed learning materials and attention.

Access to educational resources by students from polygamous families is relative; some may go to school and the school resources: textbooks, notes, pen/pencils, calculators and many more may be adequately provided while some others find it difficult to have access to the basic school resources. It is against this backdrop that Okeke (2012) observes that students' excellent performance in school is dependent on parents' level of education, their ability and disposition to meet the financial and material requirements, their interest and encouragement and social environment. More often than not, children from polygamous families attend public secondary schools that are, in the words of Okoli (2011), 'ill-equipped, ill-organized and ill-staffed. Recommended textbooks in all subjects may not be bought for the children. This may, in no small measure, hinder students' participation in classroom. Dienye (2012) contends that other activities take precedence over children's education in most polygamous families. She asserts that prompt payment of fees and other school charges is often a hard nut to crack. The children may not be sent to good schools, uniforms and all they need are not provided for them to enhance academic excellence. Ebeshi (2011) avers that most children from polygamous homes sometimes do not go to school at the right age because of financial crisis. They may not attend pre-nursery or nursery school; they have to work tooth and nail before they could go to school. In this regard, it remains unequivocal that polygamy has influence on students' access to quality education.

Access to education and or school resources encompasses quality. Accordingly, Okeke (2001) in Ibodje (2014) points out that there should be quality in people, process, service and product. Quality in educational background of parents and their high socio-economic status plays a significant role in their children's access to education or school resources.

Students' participation in school activities is, to a large extent, dependent on the school resources at their disposal. Reacting to this, Okorie (2002) in Nnabuo (2004) points out that quality in teaching and learning in schools results from an interplay among a broad range of success factors that all have implications for effective teaching and learning. Such factors include basic school facilities like classrooms, standard libraries, well equipped laboratories, staff offices, teaching facilities and so on. On the contrary, Odey (2015) asserts that most students from polygamous families do not always have access to schools that have what it takes to enhance learning. This situation adversely affects students' participation and optimal performance in class

activities. She argues that this scenario is borne out of thoughtlessness and planlessness. It is against this backdrop that Bob (2000), quoting Benjamin Franklin, points out that ‘he who fails to plan, plans to fail’.

Furthermore, Oyet in Okeke (2002) argues that access to education, especially by children from broken homes and their participation is quite discouraging. Their parents may not be there for them at all times to monitor or guide them properly at home. Therefore, the children who are the poor innocent victims of being in a polygamous family bear the brunt of poor performance that often has its expressions in public examinations such as The West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) and National Examination Council (NECO). The problem of poor participation is still prevalent today because, according to Nnolim (2012), the study of literature reveals that when man becomes incapable of adjustment, he becomes a tragic figure and goes the way of such fellows. The point here made is that considering the current economic, social and or political challenges, having many wives and children is biting more than one could chew.

The foregoing discourse has stressed the need to provide the needed school resources for children. This is imperative because access to school resources contributes in no small measure to academic excellence among hardworking students.

Methodology

Descriptive survey was used to determine the psychosocial influence of polygamy on access to quality education among students in public secondary school in Obio/Akpor, while sample of 398 students in public senior secondary schools was drawn using stratified random sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection titled: Polygamy and Access to Quality Education Questionnaire (PAQE) with the modified Likert 4-point scale. The face content validity was checked and approved by two experts in the educational psychology. The reliability of the instrument was determined through test-retest method for a measure of its stability. The reliability co-efficient was 0.7. Data was analyzed using mean and standard deviation for the research questions and using z-test statistics to test the null hypotheses.

Research Questions One: What influence has polygamy on students’ emotional stability in Obio/Akpor?

Hypotheses One: There is no significant influence on students’ emotional stability and polygamy among secondary school students in Obio/Akpor.

Table 1: Summary of z-test of differences students on the influence of polygamy on their emotional stability

| Categories | N | Mean | SD | z-value | 2-tailed value | Remarks |
|------------------------------|-----|------|-----|---------|----------------|-----------------|
| Polygamy | 201 | 3.02 | .65 | -703 | .482 | Not significant |
| Students Emotional stability | 197 | 2.84 | .35 | | | |

p > 0.05

The result of z-test of differences in Table 1 compared the mean level of influence of polygamy of 3.02 with that of students’ emotional stability of 2.84. This test yielded z-value of -703, which was found to be significant at a 2-tailed value of .492. Since this significant value is greater than 0.05 that was used in testing the hypothesis; the test is considered not significant. Since the mean for students (3.02) is higher than that of (2.84), it means, from the perspective of the students, polygamy has significantly higher influence on the emotional stability of students.

Research Questions Two: To what extent does polygamy influence students’ access to school resources among secondary school students in Obio/Akpor?

Hypotheses Two: There is no significant influence on students and polygamy on access to school resources among secondary school students in Obio/Akpor.

Table 2: Summary of z-test of differences between polygamy and students’ access to schooling resources

| Categories | N | Mean | SD | z-value | 2-tailed value | Remarks |
|-------------------------------|-----|------|-----|---------|----------------|-----------------|
| Polygamy | 212 | 2.28 | .70 | 2.720 | .007 | Not Significant |
| Access to schooling resources | 186 | 2.16 | .35 | | | |

P > 0.05

The result of z-test of differences in Table 2 compared the mean level of influence of polygamy of 2.28 with that of students’ access to schooling resources of 2.16. This test produced a z-value of 2.720, which was found to be significant at a 2-tailed value of 0.007. Since this significant value is greater than 0.05 that was used in testing the hypothesis, the test is considered not significant. Since the mean for polygamy (2.28) is higher than that of access to quality resources (2.16), it means that polygamy has significantly higher influence on access to schooling resources among secondary school students.

Discussion of Results

The results show that polygamy has moderate influence on emotional stability of students with regards to psychological trauma, tension, depression and transfer of aggression. The findings agree with Dienye (2012) that students from polygamous families are sometimes so aggressive, emotionally imbalanced and very tetchy. This has a connect with what happens at home, where there is survival of the fittest syndrome. It follows that out of depression, psychological trauma and the likes often associated with students from most polygamous homes, their memory level is affected negatively. It is on this account that Hasan (2013) asserts that most students from polygamous families often get discouraged, depressed and suffer from amnesia. The results support Odey's (2015) view that family type significantly influences students' emotion and academic performance in schools

Also, the results here indicated that polygamy has low influence on schooling resources among students with regards to adequate facilities, regular and prompt payment of fees, complete school uniform(s), recommended books in all subjects, regular transportation services and snacks when in schools. The findings agreed with the claims of most authorities captured in the study and disagreed with some others. Indeed, the results support Okeke's (2002) observation that students' excellent performance in school is dependent on parents' level of education, their ability and disposition to meet the financial and material requirements, their interest and encouragement and social environment. On the contrary, Okoli (2011) has it that most students attend schools that are "ill-equipped, ill-organized and ill-staffed. By implication, the findings revealed that most students from polygamous families may have access to school resources whereas some others may not.

Conclusion

The study has focused attention on polygamy and access to quality secondary education in Obio/Akpor. In conclusion, family type or structure, to a large extent, determines children's access to quality education, whether primary, secondary or tertiary. Based on this, polygamy has significant influence on students' access to quality secondary education.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, the researcher recommended that:

1. Adequate care should be taken by parents in order to reduce, if not completely eradicated, the level of psychological trauma, tension, depression and transfer of aggression among students from most polygamous homes.
2. Plans towards children's education should be made so that they can start their education at early age, attend school regularly, participate actively in class and have enough time to study.
3. The needed facilities such as regular and prompt payment of fees, provision of complete school uniforms, recommended textbooks in all subjects, regular transportation services and snacks when in school, should be taken seriously so as to enhance excellent performance in children's academic work.
4. Parental educational guidance, hiring of home lesson teachers and so on should be done with a view to providing extra educational supports to students from most polygamous homes for them to cope with their studies.
5. Students' interest in furthering their education/studies, high interest in university education, high interest in high profile courses and being well education before thinking of getting married should be triggered by most polygamous parents so that the sky will be their starting points in terms of their ambitions.

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