

SINGLE PARENTING AND PERFORMANCE OF FEMALE EMPLOYEES (A STUDY OF SELECTED FIRMS IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA)

UDOKWU ETHEL-ROSE B., PhD.

DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT, FACULTY OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

IMO STATE UNIVERSITY, OWERRI

&

EKERUO CHUKWUDI

DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT, FACULTY OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

IMO STATE UNIVERSITY, OWERRI

Abstract

Single parenting and performance of female employees is a research conducted to evaluate the relationship between single parenthood and job performance of single-parent female employees. The basic variables of the research were productivity, commitment, absenteeism and punctuality, from which the specific objectives of the study were derived. In the methodology, 330 respondents were sampled with questionnaire from seventy-eight business firms in Ikeja, Lagos State. While the probabilistic simple random sampling was used to draw the sample from the population of single-parent female employees, non-probability judgmental technique was used to select the seventy-eight organizations based on their possession of single-parent female employees in their workforce. The data were analyzed using the version 20 of the SPSS software for multiple correlations and analysis of variance. The results were that single parenting incidence had a strong but negative relationship with employee commitment ($r = -0.710$), employee punctuality ($r = -0.841$), employee productivity ($r = -0.591$) and a strong positive relationship with employee absenteeism ($r = +0.629$). The coefficient of multiple determination, $R = 0.70$ and adjusted $R^2 = 0.468$ showed that about 46.8% variations in the dependent variables could be accounted for by single parenting. The analysis of variance yielded a Fischer's Ratio of $F = 41.200$ which was highly significant at the 5% levels leading to the rejection of the null hypotheses of the study. The recommendations of the study were drawn from these results.

Keywords: Single parenting, employee productivity, employee commitment, employee punctuality, employee absenteeism.

Introduction

Certain changes in the family structure of employees can definitely influence their job performance. Incidence of divorce, death of a spouse, broken relationship, unplanned pregnancy and family conflict has been found to have negative correlation with employee performance, (Bayo 2016, Anderson 2017, Rebecca 2017). In many instances, the incidents mentioned above result to single parenting, which is the raising up of a child by only one parent.

Causes of single parenting are taking a rising toll globally in recent times. In the United States, for example, 19.5% were single-parent households in the 1980s (Census Trend, 2013). From 1980 to 2012, the percentage of single-parent households skyrocketed to 29.5%. This was caused by an increase in births to unmarried women and by the increasing prevalence of divorce among couples. The case is not quite different in Nigeria although the incidence is

significantly low in some localities (Bayo, 2016).

Many single parents work in various organizations as employees. Such parents have to face the challenge of balancing work-home relationship in the midst of rising domestic responsibilities.

The single parent has to handle emanating problems like financial constraints, rising stress at work and at home, psychological effects of loneliness, burden of being solely responsible for catering for the children as well as adjustment problems due to the new family structure. Viewed from this perspective, single parenthood is likely to affect the job performance of the employee parent.

By job performance we mean the ability of an employee to carry out his job functions. The Business Dictionary (2013) defines employee performance as how well job-related functions are executed by the employee in relation with expectation. To evaluate the job performance of an employee under performance management (which is an aspect of human resource management) certain factors are often considered as the criteria.

Lloyds & Feud (2017) and Rouse (2016) argue that the most measurable index of employee performance is employee productivity which is an assessment of the efficiency of the workers. Performance can also be expressed in terms of punctuality (Engle 1994) Absenteeism (Ellie 2018) and commitment (Mowday, Steers & Ponter 1979).

Business managers are always interested in identifying ways of achieving strategic advantage over their competitors. As the central point of every management strategy is the employees, who are considered the

greatest assets of the organization, employee performance invariably translates to organizational performance. In this sense, factors that affect an individual employee can affect the organization as a whole. The identification of such factors is a necessary step towards the success of strategic performance management. This study identifies the effect of single parenting on the performance of female employees of selected firms in Ikeja, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Cases of employees becoming single parents are rising in recent times. Between the late 1980s and 2017, the figure had risen from 12.4% to 28.6% (Ellie, 2018). Single parenthood resulting from divorce, broken home, family conflict and separation often lead to some psychosocial setbacks which have a tendency to undermine the employee's performance.

Single parenting affects women more than men as the women play motherly role to the single parent children. Consequently, there is always more single parent female employees than males in many organizations where gender equality is an applicable principle. Since the increasing incidence of single parenting is causing female employees to face challenges in work-home balancing, there is the need to examine single parenting with respect to employee performance. This study is necessitated by that need.

Research Objectives

The specific objectives of the study were to:

- i. Evaluate the effect of single parenting on the productivity of female employees.
- ii. Examine the effect of single parenting on the commitment of female employees.

- iii. Determine the effect of single parenting on the absenteeism of female employees.
- iv. Identify the effect of single parenting on the punctuality of female employees.

Research Questions

To realize the objectives of the study and provide solution to the research problem, the following questions were asked:

- i. What is the effect of single parenting on the productivity of female employees?
- ii. How does single parenting affect the commitment of female employees?
- iii. In what way does single parenting have effect on the absenteeism of female employee?
- iv. What is the effect of single parenting on the punctuality of female employees?

Research Hypotheses

The hypotheses that were formulated to guide the study are stated in null form as follows:

- Ho₁: Single parenting has no significant effect on the productivity of female managers.
- Ho₂: Single parenting has no significant effect on the commitment of female managers.
- Ho₃: Single parenting has no significant relationship with the absenteeism of female managers.
- Ho₄: Single parenting has no significant relationship with the punctuality of female managers.

Scope of the Study

The subject scope of the study was coverage of single parent conditions and the possible effects on the productivity, commitment, absenteeism and punctuality of female employees. Single parents constitute both

the male parents and the female parents. This study dwells on the female parents who are employees of the study organizations.

The geographic scope of the study is Ikeja. Ikeja is the capital of Lagos State Nigeria, located on latitude 6.60°N and 3.35°E on the geographical globe. It is situated at the far western region of Nigeria and has a population of about 4.5 million, as projected from recent census statistics. The town is quite industrialized, compared with other towns in Nigeria.

The time scope of the study did not have a specific upper limit but had a lower limit of two years. This means that the female employees interviewed must have been single parents for at least two years. It was believed that this period is long enough to produce significant effects on the single parent.

Significance of the Study

The study is beneficial to single parents working in various organizations in Nigeria and beyond. Business managers are also beneficiaries of the study. Single parent employees will learn from the study how their parenthood can affect their job performances. By so doing, they will be able to handle the home and the job at a balance. Business managers will also benefit in the same way from the study. The study adds to their understanding of how the family structure of their employees can influence job performance. Such understanding is vital to the application of appropriate strategies to boost performance.

Review of Related Literature

Concept of Single Parenting

Bichler (1996) defines single parenting as the raising up of a child or children by only one parent.

Brown (2014) and Bishop & Luger-soll (1999) define single parenting as the bringing up of children by a parent without the help of a partner.

Aston (2009) defines single parenting as a situation whereby death of a spouse, divorce or socio-economic conditions place the responsibility of child up-bringing on one parent.

The three definitions above all point to the same fact about the single parenting concept – a parent rising up a child alone.

In this parlance, a single parent is a mother or father who raises the children without the help or cohabitation of the partner.

Causes of Single Parenting

Many reasons and factors have been identified as being responsible for single parenthood. Rebecca (2017) identifies the following factors in this regard: divorce, death of spouse, broken relationship, child adoption, unexpected pregnancy and socio-cultural conditions.

Divorce

Divorce is the legal separation of married partners. It is a situation in which one or both of the couple decided to quit the marriage. There are no generalized reasons for divorce (Rebecca, 2017), it all depends on the tolerance of the partners. However, sexual infidelity and incompatibility are common reasons. When the divorced partners have a child (or children) it means that the responsibility of bringing up the children will be vested on either one parent or each takes a given number of the children and parts. Thus, single parenting results.

Death of a Spouse

The death of a parent leaves the responsibility of caring for the children solely on the surviving parent. This is a natural case of single parenthood which is universal

(Astone & McClanahar 2009; Bishop & Logroll, 1999). Brown (2014) asserts that death of a spouse accounts for only 22.4% of single parenthood in peaceful zones of Africa and over 64.8% in war zones. In the latter case, the surviving partners are mostly women.

Broken Relationship

Two persons who venture into a relationship without necessarily getting married give birth of children in some cultures. Such relationship can be break up, leading to single parenthood. There are also broken marriages that are not actually a divorce. In such cases a partner may be provoked to walk away from the marriage leaving the bulk responsibility of child upbringing to the partner. (Dollard, Doob, Miller & Sears 2009).

Child Adoption

This is a deliberate case in which a single parent looking for a child (or for a particular gender) resorts to adoption. People who have never got married also adopt children especially in a case where the individual has no motive of entering into marriage. Child Trends (2016) reports that adoption accounts for over 18.3% of single parent cases in the United States and about 6.6% in Nigeria and South Africa.

Unexpected Pregnancy and Socio-Cultural Condition

Single girls or ladies who venture into sexual relationships could get pregnant in the process. The resulting child is often taken care of by only the mother in most cases. However, the man responsible for the pregnancy lends some helping hand in some cases. Also, in some backgrounds, certain socio-cultural condition (such as lack of a male child in the family) can allow a single girl to get pregnant in a bid to reproduce a

male child for the family. This results to single parenting.

Positive Effects of Single Parenting

Brown (2014) and Rebecca (2017) have identified the positive aspects of single parenthood. First, there is strong mother-child bonding. According to Rebecca (2017): “spending one-on-one time with the little ones creates a unique bond which is stronger than that the obtainable in a shared-parent home.

Second, there is a sense of community in single – parent upbringing. That is, children who have single parents will also have many supporters. Third, children raised in single parent families have the obligation to rise to full responsibility, given that the vacuum created by the absent parent must be filled by them.

Fourth, single parenthood can induce hardwork and sense of responsibility on the single parent, knowing fully well that the bulk responsibility of managing the home now rests solely on his/her shoulders. Fifth, the frequent conflict and friction encountered in two-parent homes will be lacking.

Negative Effects of Single Parenting

Single parents mostly encounter financial inadequacies (Bichler, 1996, Brown, 2014, Astone 2009, Rebecca 2017). There is low parenting quality as many responsibilities add to everyday life. Stress-related under-performance can result in the workplace and domestic work overload can add to the stress (Ajila & Olutola 2017, Nwachukwu 2015). Moreover, children raised in a divorce case of single parenting almost always suffer from adjustment problems (Rebecca, 2017). There is tendency that both the single parent and the children hold to bad memories. In addition to these, emotional problems are

often triggered in both the single parent and the children and loneliness is often felt which can lead to absent – mindedness and loss of concentration.

Employee Performance

The American Business Dictionary (2013) defines employee performance as how well job-related functions are performed by an employee in relation with an expected standard. Many criteria are used to measure performance, depending on the performance indices adopted by the organization. Performance evaluation is often the responsibility of the performance management unit of the organization. This unit is deemed very crucial to the growth of the organization as employees’ performances translate to organizational performance in both the short run and long run periods (Lloyds & Feud, 2017; Rouse, 2016). Lloyds & Feud and Rouse identify productivity, commitment, punctuality, absenteeism, regularity, etc as being among the common measures of employee performance.

Employee Commitment

Employee commitment is the strength of an individual’s identification and involvement in a particular organization (<http://www.greatwithtalent.org>; 2018). In this regard, employee commitment is described using three distinct components: a strong belief in the goals of the organization and the acceptance of such goals; employee motivation or willingness to expend effort on belief of the organization; and a strong bond between the employee and the organization which makes the employee develop a strong desire to remain in the organization.

Mowday, Steers & Porter (1979) also define employee commitment as the degree of bond that exists between an employee and his job functions and; between the employee

and the organization he works for. Mowday, *et al*; write that those who are more committed to the organization also experience more job satisfaction, higher level of motivation and lower stress levels. Therefore, they tend to perform better and manifest less job-searching behavior.

Employee commitment can be affective, normative or continuant (Mowday *et. al*; 1979, cited at <http://www.greatwithtalent.org>; 2018). Employee commitment is said to be affective if it encompasses the idea of emotional identification with the organization. The emotional involvement leads to increased desired to contribute and perform as well as maintain membership to the organization.

Normative employee commitment is a perceived obligation to remain with the organization. As Mowday *et. al*; write; an employee can experience an obligation to perform work activities in the absence of a personal desire to do so. Normative employee commitment has weaker positive relationship with employee motivation and job satisfaction. Lloyds and Feud (2017) add that norms and social obligations exert more influence over actual behavior of employees, particularly in group work.

Continuance commitment involves employee's consideration of what he stands to lose should he exit the organization. Lloyds & Feud 2017 posits that this type commitment has less positive outcomes. It is actually associated with higher stress, increased work-family imbalance and poor performance.

Employee Productivity

Rouse (2016) explains employee productivity as the assessment of the efficiency of a worker in an organization.

Productivity is evaluated in terms of the output of an employee in a specific period of time. Productivity is evaluated using standards, that is, the productivity of a given employee is assessed in relation with an average (or standard) for employees doing the same or similar work.

Business often consider employee productivity every important because much of the success of an organization depends on the productivity of its employees (<http://www.whatis.com>; 2014).

Employee Punctuality

Engle (1994) & White (2012) define punctuality as the characteristic of being able to complete a required task or fulfill an obligation before or at a previously designated time. As time is one of the most treasured resources at the disposal of an organization employees as expected to be timely in their job endeavours. While some organizations may allow a certain short period before the official designated time, for example, fifteen minutes after arrival time of 8:00am, other organizations are strict and treasure employees who perform a task or obligation ahead of schedule than at any time behind schedule.

Brahimi (1991), Kaushik (2012) and Haddon (2018) argue that employees who register high performance in the organization are often associated with high level of punctuality. Moreover, a reasonable degree of employee punctuality depicts a high level of devotion of the employee to his duties.

Employee Absenteeism

Ellie (2018) defines absenteeism as "habit of being absent from work". It is the degree to which an employee fails to be present to work.

Absenteeism in the workplace affects both the organization and the employees. Some

of the effects have been identified by Ellie as: reduced productivity, increase in administration costs, poor customer service resulting from unplanned understaffing, decreasing morale of co-workers (who feel they are being cheated by the absent employee), and tendency of the repeatedly absent employee to face dismissal.

Many factors have been identified to be the causal agents of employee absenteeism. The factors include workplace bullying/harassment, stress and burnout, lack of care (on the part of the organization's management), mental health of employees, low morale and bereavement. Employees who are able to handle these circumstances without registering a significant level of absenteeism are likely to put up high performance in the organization (<http://www.highspeedtraining.co.uk>; retr.2018).

Theoretical Review

Single parental phenomenon is substantiated by many theoretical prepositions. Jacqueline (2016) noted that single parenting could be circumstantial rather than a practice and in some cases, it is actually a deliberate practice aimed basically at avoiding social disturbances that are inherent in two parent households. This duality adds to the sophistication of the single parenting concept. The Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1968); Sigmund's Pleasure Psyche Theory, Skinner's Operant Conditioning, Erickson's Psychosocial Development Theory, the Social Definition Theory (Vygotsky, 1962), the Resiliency Theory (quoted by Jacqueline 2016) and Carl Rogers self-Actualization Perspective all contribute to the understanding of the single parenting concept.

Attachment Theory

John Bowlby's Attachment Theory propounds that secure attachment between a parent and child makes parenting easier and supports parent/intimacy, which improves the child's sense of worth and promotes the parent's sense of fulfillment (Bowlby, 1968). The implication of Bowlby's proposition is that the absence of interaction involving the children of single parent families can result in attachment abnormalities and can compromise the effectiveness of parenting strategies. Morl & Ziplag (2011) argue that this can lead to a feeling of detachment, dissatisfaction and unfulfilment on the part of the single parent which triggers social behavioral inadequacies that could impair the productivity of the parent in the workplace.

Sigmund's Pleasured Psyche Theory

Sigmund's Freud in Freud (1952), quoted by Jacqueline (2016), states that the human psyche is by nature pleasure seeking. The implication of this theory to single parenthood is that parents who suffer the pain of separation do opt for risky behaviours. Although this behaviour can hamper their social life and team work yet it provides them with the gratification needed to cope with the stressors associated with the circumstance.

Theory of Operant Conditioning

Burrhus Frederic Skinner (1904-1990) propounded a theory known as operant conditioning. The theory implies that individuals will usually repeat behaviors that create favorable results. The relationship between this theory and single parenting is that many single parents struggle with self-reliance because their dependency on external supports is reinforced. Application of the theory to single parenthood entails that single parents who work and earn

financial support for themselves could be less contented than those who depend on external welfare packages. The less contentment associated with those who struggle to earn their own living could generate dissatisfaction or psychological conditions that can impair their performance in their workplaces.

Empirical Review

Data on single parenting and employee performance are scarce to come by. However, some useful information on single parenthood across the globe are available. O'Hare (2014) and Derek (2013) disclose that 27% of children in the United States live with one parent. Rawpell (2012) carried out a study on single parenthood and job related criteria. In a sample of 1120 subjects and analysis of the data, Rampell found out that more than 32% of single parents in South Africa (and most parts of the world by generalization) suffer one type of impediment or the other on their jobs.

Themas, Farell & Grace (1996) made a striking discovery from an empirical study conducted in Manhattan, United States. The study was aimed at examining the effects of single parenting on job-home relationship of female employees. Analysis of the research data by statistical software showed that the rising commitment of female single parents at home unavoidably reduces their regularity and punctuality to work. Snow down (1997) made the same discovery one year after Thomas *et al.* similarly; Bayo (2016) sampled 780 subjects in Lagos with a view to evaluating the relationship between single parenting and employee work efficiency. His results showed that single parents in the first three years of the incident exhibit reduction in work efficiency up to 22.5% in females and 16.9% among the male counterparts.

Methodology

The research was conducted as a field survey in which a selected group was interviewed on the subject of single parenting and employee performance. The selected group served as respondents to the study and their opinion and other manifestations constitute the primary data of the study.

This study group was a finite population of 1812 single parent female employees in seventy-eight business organizations in Ikeja, Lagos – Nigeria. From the population, a sample of 330 respondents was drawn using the Yaro Yamene's formula as a guide (cited by Egbulonu, 2002).

Questionnaire was used as the research instrument. It was administered to the respondents in their offices using simple random sampling technique, which allowed every respondent an equal chance of being chosen for the study. Judgmental sampling technique was used to select the seventy-eight firms based on the criterion that a good number of their female employees were single parents.

There was constructed in consideration of the research objectives using the five – point Likert scale as format. Its reliability was priority ascertained by the test-retest method which involved a pilot study in which the reliability index was determined as $r = 0.968$, indicating a high reliability (Gupta, 2013).

The analysis of the research data was carried out using the version 20 of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for multiple correlation, descriptive statistics and analysis of variance.

The results are shown below in stable 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3.

Results

Table 1: Correlations

	SP	ECO	EPU	EPR	EPA
SP	1.000				
ECO	-.710	1.000			
EPU	-.841	.605	1.000		
EPR	-.592	.429	.505	1.000	
EPA	.629	-.843	-.796	-.796	1.000

SP = Single Parenting

ECO = Employee Commitment

EPU = Employee Punctuality

EPR = Employee Productivity

EPA = Employee Absenteeism

Table 2: Model Summary

Model	Determination		Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate
	R	R ²		
1	.707	.500	.468	1.002

- Predictor(s): (SP)
- Dependent Variables: (ECO, EPU, EPR, EPA)

Table 3: ANOVA

	Model	df	Sum of Square	Mean Square	F-Ratio	Sgi
1	Regression	4	1745.2	.436.3	41.2	.000
	Residual	35	371.0	10.6		
	Total	39	2116.2			

Discussion of Findings

Findings from the correlation results as displayed in table 1 above show that a significant relationship exists between the predictive variable (single parenting, SP) and the dependent variables (Employee Commitment, (ECO), Employee Punctuality (EPU), Employee Productivity (EPR) and Employee Absenteeism (EPA). SP-has a strong but negative relationship with ECO ($r = -0.710$); and a very strong relationship with EPU ($r = -0.841$). A mild negative relationship was observed in the case of EPR and SP ($r = -0.592$) while a fairly strong positive relationship exists between EPA and SP ($r = +0.629$).

The model summary in table 2 shows a coefficient of determination of $R = 0.707$, which yields an R^2 of approximately 0.500 and adjusted R and 0.468. An R^2 of 0.500 implies that about 50% of changes in the dependent variables can be accounted for by the independent variable. That is, single parenting can influence employee commitment, punctuality, productivity and absenteeism up to 50%. This corresponds to the coefficient of non-determination ($1-R^2$) of 50%, meaning that 50% variations in employee commitment, punctuality, productivity and absenteeism are not accounted for by the single parenting. The accuracy of this prediction was verified by

the standard error of estimate of 1.002 which is very low, compared with the size of the sample data.

Findings from the ANOVA table of 3 shows a mean square of 436.3 for the regression variables and 10.6 for the residual. This yields Fisher's Ratio of $F = 41.2$, as against the tabulated value of 11.6 at the given degrees of freedom and 5% level of significance. These results led to the rejection of each of the four null hypotheses of the study (H_{01} , H_{02} , H_{03} , H_{04}) and consequent adoption of the alternative hypotheses (H_{11} , H_{12} , H_{13} , H_{14}). While the null hypothesis claimed a no-relationship between single parenting and employee performance, the alternative hypotheses maintained that a significant relationship exists between the two variables. Results from the data analysis did not allow the acceptance of the null hypotheses.

Similar findings have been made by some researchers. Rampell (2012) who discovered that more 32% of single parents around the world suffer one type of impediment on their job or the other. Snowdon (1997), Derek (2013), Anderson (2017) and Thomas, Farrell & Grace (1996) all have made related discoveries on the issue of single parenting, particularly in the United States.

Showdown (1997) showed that the high commitment of single parents (with reference to female ones) at home inevitably affect their regularity and punctuality to work. Derek (2013) noted that the results of the 2010 US census showed that 27% of children live with one parent, which is consistent with an emerging trend noted earlier in 2000. Some more recent data from Anderson (2017) show that approximately 13.7 million single parents whose single parenthood was affecting their jobs live in

Mississippi alone. Also, Thomas, Farrell & Grace (1996) discovered that about 83.4% of single parents are women, making it more relevant to study female single parents than the male counterparts.

Research reports from other parts of the world are not quite different. Many research studies document the relationship between single parenthood and some psychosocial variables, such as concentration at work, commitment to job, social interaction and work efficiency. Adeoti Bayo (2016) found out that single parenting in the first three years of the incident reduces work efficiency by up to 22.5% in females and 16.9% in among males in Lagos State, Nigeria. Concerning which form of single parenting has the heaviest impact; Adeoti & Bayo identified divorce as the most significant in this regard.

Conclusion

Single parenting has a strong but negative relationship with commitment of female employees to their jobs. Increased responsibilities and high engagement of single parents to household activities and sole upbringing of their child or children inevitably draw away their attention from their jobs. A similar negative correlation exists between single parenting and punctuality as well as with productivity of female employees. In this study, employee performance was expressed in terms of employee commitment, punctuality, productivity and absenteeism. Employee commitment punctuality and productivity were negatively related to single parenthood while employee absenteeism had a positive relationship with single parenthood. Thus, single parenting will retard productivity, impair punctuality (i.e. encourage lateness to work), diminish commitment to job and leads to high absenteeism. We therefore

conclude that, although single parenting could have positive outcomes in some circumstances, it has a significant negative impact on the job performance of female employees.

Recommendations

The findings of the study led to the recommendation that:

- i. The human resource unit of organizations establishes close relations with single parents such as through counseling units, to aid their recovery from the associated emotional disturbances.
- ii. The productivity of single parent employees can be enhanced by alleviating boredom from their jobs such as through job rotation.
- iii. The commitment of female single parent employees to their jobs can be strengthened by granting them adequate off-job days and other incentives to make them understand that the organization cares for them.
- iv. Rather than dismiss female single parent employees as a result of their rising tardiness, the human resource department of the organization should re-visit their job schedule and consider placing them on shift or part time platforms to suit their condition.

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