

## **Impact of Parental Absence on the Emotional Development and Academic Achievement of Pupils in Social Studies in Bwari Area Council, FCT Abuja**

**Friday Auta**

Secondary Education Board, Federal Capital Territory, Abuja

**Ruth James UMARU (Ph.D)**

Department of Social Science Education,  
Faculty of Education, University of Jos, Jos, Nigeria

Email: Ruthpoki3@gmail.com

DOI: 10.56201/ijssmr.v10.no7.2024.pg322.331

---

### ***Abstract***

*The study examined the impact of parental absence on the emotional development, and academic achievement of pupils in Social Studies in Bwari Area Council, FCT Abuja. The adopted the cross sectional survey design. The population of the study comprised of 15,652 (M= 8,721 and F= 6,931) and 426 teachers, making a total population of 16,07. A sample of 15 primary schools out of 59 primary schools with two hundred (200) pupils and one fifty (50) teachers were drawn and used for the study through simple random sampling and purposive techniques. The instrument used for data collection was self-constructed titled “Parental Absence on Emotional Development and Achievement Questionnaire (PAEDIAQ). The 31 items questionnaire was validated by tow experts one from test and measurement and the other from Social Studies Education, all from University of Jos. The data collected were analysed with mean and standard deviation for all the research questions, while Pearson correlation coefficient and Chi-square statistics were used to test the hypotheses formulated. The result revealed that parental absence impact on primary five pupils’ academic achievement in Social Studies in Bwari Area Council, FCT. It was also found that that there is a significant difference between parental absence and emotional development of pupils in Bwari Area Council, FCT Abuja. The study recommended that parents should play a leading role in supporting, monitoring, mentoring and evaluating their children’s emotional behaviour early in life for their children’s wellbeing.*

**Keywords:** *Academic Achievement, Emotional Development, Parental Absence, Pupils, Social Studies*

---

## Introduction

Education is the process through which an individual is made a functional member of the society through transmission of knowledge, skills and attitude. Thus, education promotes better health, increases skills and higher productivities, providing chances to live in dignity and make wise and rational decisions about one's life. In line with these views, the Federal Government of Nigeria (Umaru, Lohnan & Egan, 2020) adopts education as an instrument par excellence for affecting national development and steps that education will continue to be highly rated in national development plans. Education, therefore, makes a country spell out in clear and unequivocal terms the philosophy and objectives that underlie its investment for the development. However, what an individual acquires is largely dependent on the environment in which the individual is brought up, the kind of personalities the individual associates with.

A parent who is considered as one of the stakeholders of the school community, plays tremendous roles in the child's educational and environmental transformation; thus, the intensity or extent of participation that parents play in children's education and school, more often, has to be realistic. It is commonly believed that a parent is fundamental in protecting and directing children's behaviours as they are deeply involved in grooming children's cognitive, social and emotional development (Umaru, Lohnan & Egan, 2020). Many parents, whose children are currently enrolled in a particular school, are enormously concerned, more often being active to assist in their child's education, communicating constantly with teachers, assisting with their homework, getting involved with school projects, and discussing their child's individual academic strengths and weaknesses with teachers. Regrettably, there are also some, if not many, parents who are quite absent in their child's education. Sadly speaking, some parents have obvious manifestations of "I-don't-care" attitude.

Parental absence is a situation characterized by non-parent-teacher relationship, low or non-parents' communication with children, involuntary time spent at school or parental absence in school activities such as conferences, parents' meetings, disposal by school or not helping the child with homework (Ateş, 2021). Therefore, a two-way communication between the school and family with high parental involvement determines learner success. Researchers and educators are becoming increasingly concerned about the extent parents participate in different academic activities of primary school pupils and the potential effects this participation may incur on the academic growth and development of the pupils (Akpama, Ekuri, Ekpoto, & Egan, 2024). The involvement of parents in pupils' learning is thought to bear some effects on children's school achievement, most especially to Social Studies that is culturally domiciled with a positive relation to the pupils' actual cognitive outcome.

Psychoanalytic investigators such as Burgner (2018), in describing the emotional and psychological manifestations related to parental absence before the age of nine, notes that themes such as heightened fears involving object loss and abandonment, combined with an intensified wish for maternal closeness impaired children's emotional maturity. Parental absence is also thought to stimulate fears in regard to the normative regressive process that occurs during sleep, as well as intense anxieties in relation to drive discharge. However, some parents could be physically present

and provide the child's needs but might be emotionally absent in the education of the child or cognitive development.

Parental emotional absence denies children the warmth that propels them through to psychological and emotional maturity period, Bowlby (2019) opines that in parenting, it is expected that children experience a warm, intimate and continuous relationship with parents, in whom both find satisfaction and enjoyment, and that, not to do so, many children manifest significant mental health challenges later in life. The implication is that emotional presence of parents at an infancy stage provides the basis for secure development that could manifest in a well-disciplined adolescent. To the contrary emotional absence of a parent at infancy stage and at adolescence could breed an undisciplined child.

Emotional and social skills acquired by children can enable them to have confidence and well nurtured to build up a good mutual relationship, cope with problems confronting them and able to handle their emotion properly. The processing skills and social skills that a child possess at the school entry stage determine the child emotional and social competencies later and lead to the development of the child abilities such as making social interactions, managing behaviour, and tolerating peers frustrating attitude (Egan, Effiom, Odey, Adams, Adie & Tula, 2023). There seem to be a common association between emotional and social competencies or intelligence that can determine pupils' academic achievement.

In an attempt to distinguish the different parenting effects on development, early childhood development, like poor cognitive development, profoundly affect academic outcomes. Akellot, and Bangirana (2022) contend that, to retrospectively acknowledge the effects of children prior to school age when looking at the academic skills attainment before parents identify the schools for their children, consistently lagged behind academically and socially at all levels. Poor achievement in reading, spelling and arithmetic skills are common among children from parents' absentee home but the associated factors are unknown in Abuja Bwari, FCT. Hence, the need for a study of this nature to unravel the true situation in the Bwari.

Academic achievement in Social Studies refers to pupils' success in meeting short term goals. This is influenced by a variety of factors, from simple demographic factors such as age, gender and family socio-economic status, parents' involvement and commitment to the children education (Egan, Ariya, Oti & Umaru, 2024). Thus, the achievement of pupils in Social Studies aside other variables, strongly depends on the parents commitment to the child's learning. Based on the yearly prior first school leaving certificate examination results in Abuja, achievement of primary school pupils has been low, implying that academic skills effective for learning are not achieved.

Parental involvement is greatly associated with academic skills attainment scholars pointed out that the effects of parental involvement on academic skills attainment balanced out because of interactive outplay of child, family and school facilitators and detractors. In spite of the positive evidence, primary school pupils still have challenges in academics. Manjang, Umaru, and Egan (2025) opined that such challenges are ecological in nature with an interactive force from the individual child's own learning attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, resilience, and level of stimulation to environmental dictates like family level of support and involvement, institutional educational

system barriers like lack of remedial and educational programmes, insufficient teachers, unequipped schools, and a lack of instructional and assessment tools and governmental policies and curricula.

The Nigerian Bureau of Statistics in collaboration with the federal ministry of education demographic and educational survey report in 2022 state that nearly half (45%) of all children in Abuja do not live with both biological parents. The death of father accounts for only 5.3% of households; 22% of children in Abuja and Bwari inclusive live with their mothers while their fathers are alive and live elsewhere. The factors attributed to birth outside marriage and the breakup of the marriage union (NBS-ESR, 2022), and others even if the father is with the children, he seems not to be involved in the growth and affairs of the children. Again, despite the alarming statistics on parental absence among many Nigerian families living in Bwari inclusive, there seem to be no empirical data on the impact of parental absence on the pupil's social and emotional development as well as the pupil's educational outcome, even though more children are increasingly growing up without a father figure in their homes. Therefore, this study intends to assess the impact that the absence of parents may have on the early adolescents' social intelligence of the children life. It particularly focused on how parents' absence affects the emotional development and academic achievement of primary five pupils in Bwari.

### **Objectives of the study**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the impact of parental absence on the emotional development and academic achievement of pupils in Social Studies in Bwari Area Council, FCT Abuja. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to:

1. find out the impact of parental absence on pupils' emotional development in Bwari Area Council, FCT Abuja
2. examine the impact of parental absence on pupils' academic achievement in Social Studies in Bwari Area Council, FCT Abuja

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the impact of parental absence on pupils emotional development in Bwari Area Council, FCT Abuja?
2. What are the impact of parental absence on primary five pupils' academic achievement in Social Studies in Bwari Area Council, FCT Abuja?

### **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. There is no significant relationship between parental absence and pupils' emotional development in in Bwari Area Council, FCT Abuja.
2. There is no significant relationship between parental absence and primary five pupils' achievement in Social Studies in Bwari Area Council, FCT Abuja.

## Method and Materials

### Research Design

The study adopted a correlational survey design. The correlational survey design is a type of survey design which involves the collection of data in order to answer questions concerning the current status and phenomenon of the subject under study (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2013). This is because data was collected at a particular time from a sample of the pupils and teachers for the purpose of describing the characteristics of the general population.

### Population and Sample

The population of this study consists of all primary five pupils' and teachers of primary five pupils in Bwari Area Council of the FCT Abuja. The area has a population of 59 public primary schools with students' population 15,652 (M= 8,721 and F= 6,931) and 426 teachers. The researcher used 15 primary schools out of 59 primary schools in the Bwari Area Council with two hundred (200) pupils and one fifty (50) teachers as respondents, thus the sample size was 240.

### Sampling Techniques

The sampling techniques that were used for the study were the simple random and purposive sampling techniques. The names of the schools were written on pieces of papers. These pieces of papers were folded and thoroughly mixed together in a box after which the researcher picked one after the other without replacement, until the 10 primary schools are obtained.

### Instruments For Data Collection

The instruments used for data collection were a self-constructed questionnaire titled, Parental Absence on Emotional Development, Social Intelligence and Achievement Questionnaire (PAEDSIAQ) for all the pupils and teachers. The choice of questionnaire is because the study population is very large and the aim is for generalization and therefore, it allows respondents to tick freely. The questionnaire consists of two sections, namely; A and B. Section 'A' is meant to elicit demographic data of the respondents such as gender, name of school, and parents' occupation. Section 'B' elicits analytical data items that provided relevant data on the issues investigated in the study. The instrument was validated by two experts in Social Studies Education and Test and Measurement Units in Faculty of Education, University of Jos.

### Method of Data Analysis

The relevant data collected were analyzed using of mean and standard deviation for all the research questions while the hypotheses one and two were tested using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistic.

### Results

**Research Question One:** What are the impact of parental absence on pupils emotional development in Bwari Area Council, FCT Abuja?

**Table 1**  
**Response of Parental Absence and Pupils Emotional Development**

S/N	Statement	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	$\bar{(x)}$	Decision
1	I sometimes feel that life is meaningless when other students' parents visit and mine have never visited	86	73	39	42	2.84	Agreed
2	I have difficulties in managing my self-confidence in school because my parents do not give me attention	93	61	44	42	2.40	Disagreed
3	Parents who are involved in their children education set conducive learning environment at home than those without parental presence	49	62	88	41	2.49	Disagreed
4	I am always guided my parents to focus mainly on the solutions to the problems when encounter difficulties	56	111	45	28	2.81	Agreed
<b>Cluster Mean</b>						<b>2.63</b>	

Analysis from table 1 shows the impact of parental absence on pupils' emotional development in Bwari Area Council, FCT Abuja. Item one on, I sometimes feel that life is meaningless when other students' parents visit and mine have never visited has a mean score of 2.84. Item two on, I have difficulties in managing my self-confidence in school because my parents do not give me attention have a response mean score of 240. While parents who are involved in their children education set conducive learning environment at home than those without parental presence has a mean response of 2.49, and I am always guided my parents to focus mainly on the solutions to the problems when encounter difficulties have a mean response score of 2.81. The cluster mean of 2.63 is greater than the criterion means of 2.50. This implies that parental absence impact on pupils' emotional development in Bwari Area Council, FCT Abuja.

**Research Question Three:** What are the impact of parental absence on primary five pupils' academic achievement in Social Studies in Bwari Area Council, FCT Abuja?

**Table 2**  
**Impact of Parental Absence on Primary Five Pupils' Academic Achievement in Social Studies**

S/N	Statement	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	$\bar{(x)}$	Decision
1	My parents continuous support has improved my achievements in school	93	62	36	49	2.82	Agreed
2	My poor achievement in school is because my parents are not assisting me	41	19	88	92	2.03	Disagreed
3	Most of my failure in school is due to my parents absent	69	79	46	46	3.40	Agreed
4	I cannot easily concentrate in school whenever I remember my parent absent	33	26	101	86	2.55	Agreed
<b>Cluster Mean</b>						<b>2.70</b>	

Analysis on table 2 shows the impact of parental absence on primary five pupils' academic achievement in Social Studies in Bwari Area Council, FCT Abuja. Item one on, my parents continuous support has improved my achievements in school has a mean response score of 2.82. On the second item that my poor achievement in school is because my parents are not assisting me got a response mean score of 2.03, the third item on, most of my failure in school is due to my parents absent got a response mean score of 3.40 while the last item on I cannot easily concentrate in school whenever I remember my parent absent has a mean response of 2.55. Moreover, the cluster mean of 2.70 is greater than the criterion mean of 2.50, indicating that parental absence impact on primary five pupils' academic achievement in Social Studies in Bwari Area Council, FCT Abuja.

**Hypothesis One:** There is no significant relationship between parental absence and pupils' emotional development in Bwari Area Council, FCT Abuja

**Table 3**  
**Correlation Between Absence and Pupils' Emotional Development**

Variables	N	$\bar{(x)}$	SD	Df	Cal. r-value	Crit. Value	Decision
parental absence	240	3.3515	40.276	238	.075	.047	Rejected
pupils' emotional development	240	3.1293	57.031				

From the table above, the correlation value is 0.75 and the P value is .047. Since the P value (0.047) is less 0.05. This implies that there is a strong positive correlation between parental absence and students' emotional development. It further means that an increase in parents' presence and support has a significant increase in the students' emotional development and vice versa. Therefore, it implies that there is a significant relationship between parental absence and pupils' emotional development in Bwari Area Council, FCT Abuja.

**Research Hypothesis Three:** There is no significant relationship between parental absence and primary five pupils’ achievement in Social Studies in Bwari Area Council, FCT Abuja. Pearson Correlation was computed to find out the relationship between parental absence and primary five pupils’ achievement in Social Studies basing on students’ responses on the statements given in table 10 above. The findings are presented in the table below:

**Table 4**  
**Correlation Between Parental Absence and Primary Five Pupils’ Achievement**

Variables	N	$\bar{(x)}$	SD	Df	r=value	Crit. Value	Decision
Parental Absence	237	3.2400	41.271	238	.0.89	.015	Rejected
Pupils’ Achievement	237	3.1293	57.031				

From the table above, the correlation value is  $r=0.89$ . and the P value is .015, Since the P value (.015) is less than .0.89, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a very strong positive correlation between parents’ absence and students’ academic achievement. It was concluded that there is significant relationship between parental absence and primary five pupils’ achievement in Social Studies in Bwari Area Council, FCT Abuja

### Discussion of Findings

The main finding of the study points to the fact that parental absence impact on pupils’ emotional development in Bwari Area Council, FCT Abuja. Children who were cared for by others were not at higher risk of having delayed development as long as the pupils live with their mother, while the father’s presence or absence from the home did not make a difference. The finding raises concern for the large number of children living separately from their parent, and raises questions about the long-term effects of parental absence for this generation of Nigerian children.

The bond of affection between parents and children is instrumental for a healthy parent-child relationship which further extends to relationships between children, their siblings and other family members. Infants’ attachment to parents builds pupils confidence to explore and interact with the environment and helps establish the footing for further social, emotional and cognitive development (Akellot & Paul, 2022). The findings reinforce how important parental absence impact on pupils’ social intelligence in Social Studies. Egan, Bisong, Odey, and Umaru (2022) states that “although it is in the best interest of the child to have many, many caregivers within a family group, the research over many decades reveals that there is, really, just one person who carries the extra burden of a special attachment.

The study also found that there is a significant difference between parental absence on male and female primary five pupils’ social intelligence in Social Studies. This finding is in agreement with Biu (2021) that person, the one who bears ultimate responsibility for the health and well-being of an infant, is typically the mother. ...A young child is biologically wired to choose just one person as the primary attachment figure. The researcher is of the opinion that to ensures that one person is ultimately responsible for meeting an infant's needs. The original theory posits that,

although fathers are important in infancy, they most commonly play a secondary role to the mother, and their primary role is to provide emotional support for mothering.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

There is a positive relationship between parental absence and emotional development of pupils and positive relationship between parental absence and pupils' school achievement. There is therefore, the need to encourage parents to engage children on how to adjust emotionally and promote school achievement by being a model to the children. The study concluded that the absence of parents from pupils' education are inclined to poor emotional development characterized by various aspects. The following recommendations were suggested:

1. Parents should also deem it necessary to listen and pay attention to their children as well as using positive words when discussing with them.
2. Parents should always encourage their children in spite of all odds; this can be done by providing learning materials, visiting their various schools.
3. Finally, parents could make series of calls to teachers to inquire about their children's welfare in the school.

### References

- Ateş, A. (2021). The relationship between parental involvement in education and academic achievement: A meta-analysis study. *Pegem Journal of Education and Instruction*, 11(3), 50-66.
- Akellot, J., & Bangirana, P. (2022). Association between parental involvement and academic achievement of deaf children at Mulago deaf school, Kampala, Uganda. *African Health Science*, 19(2), 2270-2281.
- Akpama, V. S., Ekuri, P. G., Ekpoto, E. A. & Egan, H. E. (2024). Effectiveness of Social Studies curriculum instruction on adolescent risky sexual behaviour of junior secondary students in Calabar Municipality, Cross River State. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 8(7), 1114-1123
- Biu, T. N. (2021). *Violence in schools, causes and potential solutions*. Nairobi: Evangel Publishing House
- Burgner, M. (2018). The Oedipal experience: Effects on development of an absent father. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 6(6), 311-320.
- Egan, H. E., Bisong, K. B., Odey, M. O., & Umaru, R. J. (2022). Sociological analysis of parental variables and students' academic performance in Calabar Municipal Council Area of Cross River State. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 6(11), 749-753. <https://www.rsisinternational.org/journals/ijriss/Digital-Library/volume-6-issue-pdf>

- Egan, H. E., Effiom, V. N., Odey, M. O., Adams, A. P., Adie, R. U. & Tula, S. D. (2023). Breastfeeding primary school teachers' mental well-being and work environment in Cross River State, Nigeria. *Advance Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, 8(4), 32-42. <https://aspjournals.org/ajess>
- Egan, H. E., Ariya, D. A., Oti, G. O. & Umaru, R. J. (2024). Effects of test feedback on junior secondary school students' achievement in social studies in Bekwarra Local Government Area of Cross River State. *International Journal of Education and Evaluation*, 10(3), 62-69.
- Manjang, A. J., Umaru, R. J. & Egan, H. E. (2024). Effects of visual metaphor on pupils' achievement in Social Studies in Bassa, Plateau State. *International Journal of Education and Evaluation*, 10(3), 243-249.
- Umaru, R. J., Lohnan, N. N., & Egan, E. H. (2020). Challenges of quality and development of higher education in Plateau State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Educational Studies*, 2(2), 186 – 196.