

Conduct Behaviour, Self-Esteem and Assertiveness of Adolescents From Single Parent and Nuclear Families at A Church Community In Gokwe, Zimbabwe: A Comparative Study

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Abstract:

Background: Adolescents as a special population may be viewed in basic terms as a population of humans constituting old children or young adults (WHO, 2017). Contemporary WHO reports suggest that this special population has experienced mental health challenges that range from depression, anxiety and other behavioural disorders which accounts for 13% of the global burden of disease. Globally, research has focused on other factors that have negative influence on the wellbeing of adolescents. These other factors range from individual susceptibility, peer influence, family parenting interactions, physiological changes and brain maturation, drug and substance abuse, hormonal, faith, beliefs, attitudes, economic status and media influence (Brofenbrenner, 1979; Sperling, 2020). The researchers' conceptions were keen on finding out whether or not adolescent behavioural outcomes were influenced by family structure.

Materials and Methods: In this quantitative comparative study, 56 adolescent youths that are members of the Catholic Youth Association, belonging to age group 13 -26 years, boys and girls who reside with their parents (in single and nuclear family structures) around the Gokwe Town locations were selected using stratified random sampling procedure. Data for the study was collected using Rosenberg Self-esteem scale (RSES), Rathus Assertiveness schedule (RAS) and Conduct Disorder rating scale (CDRS). The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) © Version 16 was used to analyse study data. To confirm or refute the study hypotheses, a t-test was used.

Results: The findings of the study refuted the hypothesis that adolescents living in single parent families and those living in nuclear families present with similar conduct behaviour, self-esteem and assertiveness.

Conclusion: Therefore family structure exerts an influence on adolescent conduct behaviour, self-esteem and assertiveness. Findings of this study could lead to better support for adolescents living in single parent families.

Keyword: Behaviour Outcomes, Adolescents, Single Parent Family, Nuclear Family, Family structure, Externalising behaviour, Risk taking behaviour

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I. Introduction

Family structure has frequently been identified as a predictor of adolescent conduct behaviour, self-esteem and assertiveness. Examples of adolescent conduct behaviour include disobeying rules, insulting fellow students, using abusive language, stealing, quarrelling, aggressiveness, fighting, vandalism, drug abuse, weapon carrying, alcohol abuse, rape, examination malpractices, school violence, bullying, cultism, truancy, school drop-outs (Ayatunji, 2019; Farrington, 1991). Self-esteem refers to a person's sense of self-worth and is closely associated with well-being and a number of other adaptive outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Being assertive is having the confidence to stand up for oneself in a courteous and honest manner (Immanuel & Muo, 2022). In other words, assertiveness requires a person to have effective communication abilities and be ready to speak up for one's wants and interests in an honest and forthright manner.

Studies conducted in United States (Hemovich & Crano, 2009), Canada (Rahmati, Nourian & Okoli, 2011), Indonesia (Amatulah & Hastuti, 2022), Romania (Ioana, Tocai, Sirbu & Chipea, 2015), South Africa (Anyanwu, Akinsola, Tugli & Nmehielle, 2020), Nigeria (Ayatunji, 2019) and Zimbabwe (Mambende, Nyandoro, Maunganidze & Sawuti, 2016) with adolescents within age range 12 to 18 years have shown that more adolescents from single parent families had more smoking, sexual violence, bullying, risk taking, non-conforming and delinquent behaviour than those from nuclear families. Similarly, other studies conducted in

Iran (Alami et al., 2012), America (Grim, 2020), Croatia (Merkas, 2013), Kenya (Onsando, 2017) and Zimbabwe (Vandirayi, 2018) revealed that adolescents residing with a single parent had lower self-esteem than those living in both parents households. As for assertiveness, several studies conducted in Brazil (Leme et al., 2014), Istanbul (Demirbilek, 2014), Turkey (Usakli, 2006), Nigeria (Immanuel & Muo, 2022) and Zimbabwe (Chapani, 2021) indicated that adolescents from single parent families were less assertive than those from nuclear families. The present study focused on a church environment and that presents a significant variable and predictor to adolescent behavioural outcomes. A study done under these conditions can potentially yield contrasting findings and worthwhile to investigate bearing in mind that, adolescents are equally socialised by religious organisations towards certain orientations and that may influence the findings of this study. No particular and similar study has been recorded under similar conditions.

II. Material And Methods

This prospective comparative study was carried out at St. Johns' Catholic Church, Gokwe in Zimbabwe with adolescents from single parent families and nuclear families from July 2022 to November 2022. A total of 56 adolescents (both male and females) of aged 13 -26 years were in this study.

Study Design: A comparative study

Study Location: This was a family parenting study done at St. John's Catholic Church in Gokwe in Midlands Province in Zimbabwe.

Study Duration: July 2022 to November 2022.

Sample size: 56 Adolescents.

Sample size calculation: The sample size was estimated on the basis of a stratified proportion design. The target population from which a sample was drawn was 70. The sample size actually obtained for this study was 56 adolescents which translated to 80% of the participants directly participating in the study. We assumed a confidence level of 95%.

Subjects & selection method: stratified random sampling was conducted to identify and recruit 56 participants from a population of 70 adolescents drawn from Single and nuclear parent families at St. John's Catholic Church in Gokwe.

The groups were as follows:

Adolescents from Single Parent Families A (N= 28 adolescents)

Adolescents from Nuclear Families group B (N=28 adolescents)

Procedure methodology

Permission for the study was sought from the Church authorities. Each participant signed a consent form. Before the study commenced, participants received information about the research. The information provided explained in detail the research purpose, procedures, risks and benefits including the rights of the participant and contact information of the researchers. Trained volunteers administered Conduct Disorder Rating Scale (CDRS), Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (RSES) and Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (RAS).

Statistical analysis

The responses emerging from the instruments were analysed using the SPSS version 20 Software (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL). Student's t-test was utilised to compare the mean scores of the two groups. Chi-square and Fisher exact tests were performed to test for differences in proportions of categorical variables between two or more groups. The level $P < 0.05$ was considered as the cutoff value or significance.

III. Result

Participant Characteristics

Table 1 below shows that 56 adolescents (35 males and 21 females) were included in the study. Twenty-five participants came from single parent families while thirty-one were from nuclear families. Their ages ranged from 13 to 19 years. Thirteen participants resided in NY, 7 in GV, 10 in CH, 13 in NJ, 10 in MF and 3 in CM.

Table 1

Family Structure	Age Group (13-15 years)	Age Group (16-19 years)	Sex		Residential Location						Total
			M	F	NY	GV	CH	NJ	MF	CM	
Single Parent Family	10	15	12	13	7	4	5	5	2	2	25
Nuclear Family	25	6	23	8	6	3	5	8	8	1	31
Total	35	21	35	21	13	7	10	13	10	3	56

According to statistical analysis adolescents from single parent families presented with higher conduct behaviour problems, lower self-esteem and assertiveness than those from nuclear families. The study findings endorsed findings of several past research which indicated that: (a) compared with adolescents living in single parent families, those living in nuclear families had lower rates of conduct behaviour (Amatulah & Hastuti, 2022), (b) adolescents living in nuclear families showed a more positive self-esteem than their counterparts living in single parent families (Onsandos, 2017) and (c) adolescents who grew up in single-parent households were less likely to show assertiveness (Usakli, 2006). Therefore family structure exerts an influence on adolescent conduct behaviour, self-esteem and assertiveness. Findings of this study could lead to better support for adolescents living in single parent families to include those receiving mentorship within religious contexts.

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