

**THE EFFECTS OF PARENTAL SEPERATION ON CHILDREN'S WELL BEING IN  
EKOSODIN COMMUNITY, IMPLICATION FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE**

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BENIN CITY**

**NOVEMBER, 2025.**

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK, FACULTY OF  
SOCIAL SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY, NIGERIA, IN PARTIAL  
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF THE BACHELOR  
OF SCIENCE (B. Sc) DEGREE IN SOCIAL WORK**

**NOVEMBER, 2025.**

## **CERTIFICATION**

We, the undersigned, certify that this research work was carried out by **Angel Barakat OSIGBEMHE** with Matriculation Number **SSC2106129** of the Department of Social Work, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City, in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the Bachelor of Science (B.Sc) Degree in Social Work.

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**MR. UGEGE A. PETER**  
**(PROJECT SUPERVISOR)**

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**DATE**

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**DR. (MRS.) H.E. EWEKA**  
**(HEAD OF DEPARTMENT)**

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**DATE**

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this project to God Almighty, my ultimate source of strength and support. His endless love, grace, and mercy have guided and sustained me to this point, making the completion of this project possible.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am profoundly grateful to Almighty God for His boundless grace, divine protection, wisdom, and strength which have sustained me throughout this academic journey. His faithfulness and mercy have been my anchor from the beginning of this project to its successful completion. To Him alone be all the glory, honour, and praise.

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## ABSTRACT

*This study explores the effects of parental separation on the well-being of adolescents and young adults in the Ekosodin community, Benin City, Nigeria, and examines the implications for social work practice. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research investigates emotional, psychological, academic, and behavioural outcomes among individuals aged 12 to 25 who have experienced parental separation. Findings reveal that separation often leads to emotional distress, including anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem, as well as behavioural changes such as aggression, withdrawal, and academic disengagement. The study also identifies gaps in community support systems and limited access to formal psychosocial services. While some resilience factors and coping mechanisms were observed, many young people lacked adequate resources to manage the long-term impact of separation. The research highlights the urgent need for culturally sensitive, community-based social work interventions tailored to the unique socio-economic and demographic context of Ekosodin. Recommendations include strengthening local support networks, expanding access to counseling services, and integrating social work strategies into youth development programs.*

**Keywords:** Parental Separation, Adolescents, Young Adults, Ekosodin Community, Well-being, Social Work Practice, Emotional Impact, Academic Performance, Behavioural Changes, Community Support Systems.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

The family, in its myriad configurations, stands as the most fundamental social institution, bearing the primary responsibility for the holistic development, comprehensive socialization, and emotional nurturing of children and young people across all human societies (Okoro, 2019; Uwaifo, 2017). Within this foundational unit, the stability, coherence, and consistent presence of both parents are widely considered optimal for fostering secure attachment bonds, imparting essential moral and ethical values, guiding educational pursuits, and cultivating the psychological resilience necessary for individuals to navigate the inherent complexities and challenges of life. This consistent parental presence provides an indispensable framework of emotional security, predictable routines, economic stability, and consistent guidance and discipline, all of which are critically important for a young person's successful progression through various intricate developmental milestones, spanning from early childhood through late adolescence and into early adulthood. However, the fabric of contemporary family structures is undergoing profound and accelerating transformations globally. These changes are particularly pronounced within rapidly urbanizing African contexts, such as Nigeria, where traditional societal norms are increasingly intersecting with modern influences, leading to a noticeable escalation in the incidence of parental separation.

This multifaceted phenomenon, which can arise from formal marital dissolution (divorce), legal separation, prolonged physical absence due to economic migration (both internal and international), abandonment, or chronic marital discord culminating in parents living apart, introduces a profound and often traumatic disequilibrium into the lives of young people, fundamentally altering established family routines, disrupting social environments, and undermining their very perception of security and stability.

The ramifications of parental separation are exceptionally multifaceted, deeply pervasive, and long-lasting, extending far beyond the immediate emotional shock and distress experienced by young people. Extensive and accumulating research globally has consistently highlighted a broad spectrum of potential negative outcomes spanning multiple domains of well-being. These adverse impacts include, but are not limited to, significant challenges in academic performance, difficulties in psychological adjustment, compromised emotional stability, and impairments in the capacity to form and maintain healthy social and interpersonal relationships (Amato, 2000; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Pedro-Carroll, 2005). Children and adolescents from separated families frequently exhibit heightened levels of internalizing problems, such as chronic anxiety, depressive symptoms, social withdrawal, and low self-esteem, which can manifest as persistent sadness or feelings of hopelessness. Concurrently, they may also display externalizing behaviors, including aggression, defiance, conduct disorders, delinquency, and increased engagement in risk-taking activities, which serve as maladaptive coping mechanisms for their underlying turmoil (Kelly & Emery, 2003; Peterson & Zill, 1986). Beyond these critical psychological and

behavioural dimensions, parental separation often precipitates a discernible decline in academic engagement and achievement, potentially leading to increased school truancy, diminished concentration in learning environments, and difficulties in progressing through educational stages, thereby significantly limiting future academic and career opportunities. Furthermore, the economic implications are frequently severe and immediate, as a single-parent household typically faces a substantial reduction in financial resources, impacting access to quality education, adequate healthcare services, nutritious food, and safe housing, all of which are fundamental to a young person's physical, cognitive, and social development (Olukoya, 2015; Garfinkel & McLanahan, 1986). The long-term effects of such early-life disruptions can even manifest prominently in adulthood, influencing future relational patterns, professional stability, self-esteem, and overall life satisfaction and happiness (Wallerstein, Lewis & Blakeslee, 2000).

In the Nigerian context, the traditional extended family system has historically functioned as a robust social safety net, often providing crucial emotional, social, and economic buffers during times of familial stress and disruption. However, the relentless pressures of rapid urbanization, persistent economic hardship, and the gradual erosion of communal support systems in increasingly individualistic and nuclear family-oriented urban settings mean that this traditional buffer may not always be sufficiently robust or readily available to comprehensively mitigate the full and complex impact of parental separation (Ezeh, 2017; Fafunwa, 1974). The Ekosodin community in Benin City, Edo State, vividly exemplifies such a dynamic and evolving environment. As a densely populated and bustling area immediately adjacent to the prestigious

University of Benin, Ekosodin is characterized by a unique and fluid demographic blend that includes long-term indigenous residents, a substantial and often transient student population (many of whom are young adults themselves, some with families), and individuals from diverse socio-economic backgrounds drawn by the economic opportunities associated with the university environment. This particular and intricate local context introduces specific nuances to the experience of parental separation. Young people in Ekosodin may navigate distinct challenges related to a fluctuating or less stable support network, exposure to a wide array of peer influences (both positive and negative), and varying levels of access to formal psychological or social work support services, often due to lack of awareness, stigma, or affordability issues (Ajala, 2018). While the broad effects of parental separation are internationally recognized and extensively documented, there remains a critical and pronounced void in empirical research that specifically investigates these effects within the granular, culturally specific, and socio-economically heterogeneous environment of Ekosodin.

Understanding these localized and context-dependent implications is not merely an academic exercise; it represents an urgent imperative for the development of culturally sensitive, contextually relevant, evidence-based, and truly effective social work interventions. This study, therefore, is strategically positioned to meticulously examine the multifaceted and often profound effects of parental separation on the well-being of adolescents and young adults within the distinct socio-cultural milieu of the Ekosodin community, thereby providing invaluable localized insights with direct and actionable implications for social work practice.

## **1.2 Statement of Research Problem**

Parental separation, irrespective of the specific circumstances leading to it, constitutes a profound and often traumatic crisis point that fundamentally alters the established order and emotional equilibrium of a young person's life. The immediate aftermath is typically characterized by a cascade of intense emotional distress, encompassing pervasive feelings of loss, acute confusion, unexpressed anger, and profound sensations of abandonment. These initial, acute reactions, if left unaddressed, unsupported, and unmanaged, possess the potential to evolve into more chronic and debilitating psychological states, such as prolonged grief reactions, anxiety disorders, clinical depression, and even symptoms akin to post-traumatic stress (Wallerstein & Lewis, 1998; Davies & Cummings, 1994). Beyond the intricate emotional landscape, the profound structural alterations consequent to parental separation – such as significant changes in residential arrangements, often contentious custody disputes, a frequently substantial reduction in financial stability, and potential shifts in parental availability, attentiveness, and parenting styles – can profoundly disrupt a young person's daily routines, compromise their academic focus, and negatively impact their social engagements and developmental trajectories. This multifaceted disruption can manifest as a discernible decline in academic performance, increased absenteeism from school or university, significant difficulties in concentrating on educational tasks, and tangible challenges in forming and maintaining positive peer and intimate relationships (Guidubaldi & Cleminshaw, 1985; Hetherington, 1989). Furthermore, young people may exhibit a wide and varied range of behavioural problems,

including heightened aggression, increased defiance towards authority figures, social withdrawal, or engaging in various risk-taking behaviors (e.g., substance abuse, early sexual activity, delinquency), which often serve as maladaptive coping mechanisms for their underlying internal turmoil and distress.

In the Ekosodin community, the problem of parental separation is particularly salient and complex given its unique socio-demographic composition and dynamic nature. The constant influx and efflux of individuals associated with the university, coupled with pervasive economic pressures and the evolving family dynamics typical of peri-urban areas in Nigeria, strongly suggest that a significant and growing number of adolescents and young adults in Ekosodin are likely navigating the intricate complexities and inherent stresses of parental separation. However, the specific ways in which these individuals are impacted within this distinct local context, and the precise nature and severity of the challenges they face, remain largely unexplored, undocumented, and hence, poorly understood. Are the existing traditional coping mechanisms or informal support systems prevalent within Ekosodin sufficiently robust and accessible to adequately buffer the diverse adverse effects of separation for this age group? Do young people in this community have adequate access to formal psychological counseling, therapeutic interventions, or structured social work support services, or are they largely left to cope on their own, often silently? What are the specific academic, emotional, social, and behavioural manifestations of parental separation that are unique or particularly pronounced among adolescents and young adults within this particular environment? The critical absence of

empirical data and localized understanding on these specific impacts within Ekosodin means that current interventions, if they exist, are often generalized, potentially culturally insensitive, ill-suited, or fail to adequately address the root causes of their distress.

This critical knowledge gap not only hinders but actively impedes the development of targeted, evidence-based, effective, and sustainable social work practices. Consequently, adolescents and young adults affected by parental separation in Ekosodin may remain disproportionately vulnerable to long-term negative outcomes, potentially perpetuating cycles of emotional distress, social maladjustment, and curtailed developmental opportunities. This study is therefore necessitated by the urgent and pressing need to systematically map out, analyze, and thoroughly understand the distinct and nuanced effects of parental separation on the well-being of adolescents and young adults within the Ekosodin community, thereby providing an essential evidence-based foundation for designing and implementing relevant, impactful, and culturally appropriate social work interventions.

### **1.3 Aims and Objectives of the Study**

This study broadly aims to thoroughly examine the effects of parental separation on the well-being of adolescents and young adults in the Ekosodin community, ultimately offering actionable implications for social work practice. To achieve this overarching aim, the study specific objectives are to:

- i. Identify and describe the emotional and psychological effects experienced by adolescents and young adults in the Ekosodin community due to parental separation.

- ii. Assess the specific influence of parental separation on the academic performance and educational engagement of adolescents and young adults residing in Ekosodin Community.
- iii. Explore and document the major behavioural changes observed in adolescents and young adults within Ekosodin Community who have undergone parental separation.
- iv. Analyze the role and effectiveness of existing community support systems and current social work interventions in mitigating the negative effects of parental separation on adolescents and young adults in Ekosodin Community, and to identify areas for improvement.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

To provide a focused and systematic examination of the problem, this study will be guided by the following core research questions:

- i. What are the perceived emotional and psychological effects of parental separation on adolescents and young adults within the Ekosodin community?
- ii. How does parental separation specifically influence the academic performance and educational engagement of adolescents and young adults in Ekosodin Community?
- iii. What are the primary behavioural changes observed in adolescents and young adults residing in Ekosodin Community who have experienced parental separation?
- iv. How do existing community support systems and current social work practices address the challenges faced by adolescents and young adults of separated parents in Ekosodin Community, and what more is needed?

## **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study holds significant importance for several stakeholders, primarily adolescents and young adults, parents, social work practitioners, policymakers, and researchers, particularly within the Nigerian context and specifically the Ekosodin community. For young people experiencing parental separation, the findings of this research will provide a voice to their experiences, shedding light on the often-unseen struggles they face. By detailing the emotional, psychological, academic, and behavioural impacts, the study can contribute to greater empathy and understanding from their caregivers and the wider community. This enhanced understanding is a crucial first step towards developing more targeted and compassionate support systems for them.

For parents undergoing separation, this study can offer valuable insights into the potential ramifications of their decisions on their children's well-being. By highlighting the specific challenges young people face in the Ekosodin context, parents can be better informed to make decisions that prioritize their children's stability and emotional health during and after separation. It may also encourage them to seek appropriate support services for their children and for themselves.

Crucially, for social work practice, this study will provide an empirical basis for developing and refining interventions tailored to the unique needs of adolescents and young adults in Ekosodin affected by parental separation. The findings will inform the design of culturally sensitive programs, counseling services, and advocacy efforts. Social workers will gain

a deeper understanding of the specific vulnerabilities and resilience factors within this community, enabling them to provide more effective psychosocial support, family mediation services, and youth protection interventions. The study's focus on coping mechanisms and community support systems will be particularly valuable for devising strength-based approaches in social work.

Furthermore, policymakers at local and state levels can utilize the findings to formulate evidence-based policies and programs aimed at supporting young people from separated families. This could include initiatives related to youth welfare, education, mental health services, and legal aid. For researchers, this study contributes to the existing body of literature on parental separation, particularly by filling a gap in localized research within a Nigerian urban community. It can serve as a foundation for future studies, encouraging further exploration of specific aspects of youth well-being, long-term outcomes, and comparative analyses across different communities. Ultimately, this research aims to foster a more supportive and understanding environment for young people navigating the complexities of parental separation in Ekosodin, thereby enhancing their overall well-being and promoting healthy development.

## **1.6 Scope of the Study**

This study focuses on investigating the effects of parental separation on the well-being of individuals residing specifically within the Ekosodin community in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. The geographical delimitation to Ekosodin is deliberate, recognizing the unique socio-cultural and economic characteristics of this area, particularly its proximity to the University of

Benin, which may influence family structures and the experiences of young people. The study will concentrate on adolescents and young adults aged 12 to 25 years, as this age range represents a critical period of identity formation, educational pursuits, and increasing independence, during which the long-term effects of parental separation can manifest significantly.

### **1.7 Definition of Basic Concepts**

To ensure clarity and consistency throughout this study, the following key concepts are defined as they will be applied within this research context:

**Ekosodin Community:** The specific geographical area in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria, adjacent to the University of Benin, which serves as the study's locale and participant recruitment area.

**Implication:** The practical inferences or suggestions drawn from the study's questionnaire-based findings that inform and enhance social work interventions for adolescents and young adults affected by parental separation.

**Parental Separation:** The dissolution of a marital or cohabiting relationship between an individual's parents, resulting in one or both parents no longer residing in the primary household or having a consistent parental presence. This includes formal divorce or informal separation relevant to the individual's living situation during their developmental years.

**Social Work Practice:** Professional interventions and strategies applied by social workers to support adolescents, young adults, and families affected by parental separation, focusing on psychosocial aid, advocacy, and resource provision as informed by the study's findings.

**Well-being:** An individual's holistic state encompassing their emotional, psychological, academic, social, and behavioural health. This refers specifically to observed and reported changes in these areas following parental separation, as captured by the study's instruments within the 12-25 age range.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter presents a comprehensive review of existing scholarly literature relevant to the effects of parental separation on the well-being of adolescents and young adults. It aims to establish the theoretical and empirical foundations for the current study, identify key concepts, explore established findings, and highlight the gaps in current research that this study seeks to address within the context of the Ekosodin community. The review will traverse various dimensions of well-being, coping mechanisms, and the role of support systems, culminating in a synthesis of the empirical landscape and a discussion of guiding theoretical frameworks.

#### **2.1 Conceptual Overview**

Parental separation, at its core, signifies the dissolution of a cohabiting or marital relationship between a child's primary caregivers, leading to a fundamental shift in family structure and, often, the physical or emotional absence of one or both parents from the daily lives of their children (Amato, 2010). This phenomenon is not monolithic; it encompasses a spectrum of scenarios beyond formal divorce. It includes legal separation, where a court formally sanctions the living apart of spouses; informal separation, where parents simply cease living together without legal intervention; and parental abandonment, which involves a parent intentionally deserting their child and severing contact. Furthermore, prolonged parental absence due to factors such as economic migration, overseas employment, or incarceration, while not

always a 'separation' in the traditional sense of marital dissolution, can nonetheless create similar experiences of parental absence and disruption for the young person (Oduol, 2016). The definition for this study, therefore, extends to any situation where parents who previously shared a primary caregiving role for a young person no longer cohabit, leading to a significant alteration in the young person's daily experience of parental presence and engagement.

Globally, the rates of divorce and separation have been on an upward trend over the past few decades, driven by factors such as changing societal values, increased female economic independence, and reduced stigma associated with marital dissolution (Cherlin, 2004). In Nigeria, while official divorce statistics can be challenging to ascertain comprehensively due to the prevalence of customary and religious marriages and informal separations, anecdotal evidence and sociological studies suggest a rising incidence of marital instability, particularly in urban centers (Ogunode & Yahaya, 2021; FOS, 2018). Urbanization often brings about unique stressors on family units, including economic pressures, erosion of traditional extended family support, and exposure to diverse cultural norms, all of which can contribute to marital strain and subsequent separation. For instance, the National Population Commission (NPC) data, though not directly on separation, highlights shifting household structures. In communities like Ekosodin, characterized by its proximity to a major university and a diverse, often transient population, the dynamics of parental separation may be further nuanced. The economic opportunities or challenges within such an urban hub might lead to more instances of economic migration-induced parental absence, or the university environment itself might foster a more

independent mindset regarding marital choices, contributing to separation rates (Adewale, 2019). Understanding these varied forms and their prevalence provides a crucial contextual backdrop for examining their effects.

### **2.1.2 Effects of Parental Separation on Emotional, Psychological and Social Well-being**

The emotional and psychological impact of parental separation on adolescents and young adults is profound and multifaceted, often more complex than that experienced by younger children (Wallerstein et al., 2000). Unlike younger children who may express distress through overt behavioural issues, adolescents and young adults possess greater cognitive capacity to understand the implications of separation, leading to a broader range of internalized emotional and psychological responses. They may experience intense feelings of grief and loss, akin to bereavement, for the dissolved family unit, coupled with profound sadness, anger, and resentment towards one or both parents (Amato, 2000). Guilt, the feeling of being responsible for the separation, is also common, especially if they witnessed frequent parental conflict prior to the split. Anxiety about their future, financial instability, and changes in living arrangements can lead to chronic stress and, in severe cases, the development of anxiety disorders or clinical depression (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Some may withdraw socially, struggling with loneliness and isolation, while others may experience heightened irritability, mood swings, and a general sense of emotional dysregulation. Self-esteem often takes a significant hit, as the young person may internalize the separation as a personal failure or believe they are somehow less worthy (Bernard & Bernard, 2007).

Beyond internal experiences, parental separation significantly impacts a young person's social well-being and relationships. Trust issues can emerge, affecting their ability to form secure attachments and stable friendships (Kelly, 2000). They might become wary of commitment or, conversely, rush into relationships seeking the stability absent in their home life. Peer relationships can either become a crucial source of support or, if the young person struggles with social skills or emotional regulation, a source of further distress. Some may seek solace in peer groups that engage in risky behaviors, influenced by a desire for acceptance or a rebellion against their disrupted home environment (Peterson & Zill, 1986). For young adults, the effects can manifest in challenges with independence, delayed entry into adulthood, difficulties in forming stable romantic relationships, and even impacting their own parenting styles if they eventually have children (Wallerstein et al., 2000). The specific dynamics post-separation, such as ongoing parental conflict, financial hardship, or inconsistent parenting, are often more predictive of negative outcomes than the separation itself (Amato & Keith, 1991).

### **2.1.3 Effects of Parental Separation on Academic Performance and Behavioural Patterns**

The academic and behavioural domains are particularly vulnerable to the disruptive force of parental separation during adolescence and young adulthood. Academically, numerous studies indicate a decline in performance among young people whose parents have separated (Sun & Li, 2002). This can manifest as lower grades, reduced concentration in class, increased absenteeism, and a diminished motivation towards school or university. The emotional distress and psychological preoccupation with family issues often make it difficult for young people to focus

on their studies. Changes in living arrangements, financial strain impacting access to educational resources (e.g., private lessons, textbooks, internet), or even a change in schools due to relocation can further disrupt academic progress (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). For young adults in higher education, parental separation can lead to increased stress, financial difficulties that necessitate working more hours, or even dropping out of university altogether (Demo & Acock, 1988). Their future career aspirations may also be dampened by the instability.

Behaviourally, parental separation can trigger a wide range of maladaptive responses in adolescents and young adults. These behaviors are often outward expressions of internal turmoil or attempts to cope with overwhelming emotions. Common behavioural changes include increased aggression, defiance towards authority figures (parents, teachers), and general conduct problems both at home and in school (Block et al., 1986). Some young people may exhibit more internalizing behaviors, such as social withdrawal, isolation, and a significant decrease in participation in extracurricular activities. There is also an increased risk of engaging in high-risk behaviors, including substance abuse (alcohol, drugs), early and unprotected sexual activity, truancy, and involvement in delinquent acts (Fergusson et al., 1999). These behaviors may serve as a means of escape, a cry for attention, a form of self-medication, or an attempt to exert control in a situation where they feel powerless. The extent and nature of these behavioural changes are often influenced by factors such as the level of inter-parental conflict post-separation, financial strain, the quality of the parent-child relationship with both parents, and the presence of protective factors within their environment (Kelly, 2000).

#### **2.1.4 Coping Mechanisms and Resilience Factors among Adolescents and Young Adults of Separated Parents**

Adolescents and young adults navigating parental separation employ a diverse array of coping mechanisms, both adaptive and maladaptive, to manage the accompanying stress and emotional turmoil (Compas et al., 2001). Adaptive strategies often involve seeking social support from friends, extended family members, or other trusted adults (teachers, religious leaders). Engaging in problem-focused coping, such as actively trying to improve communication between parents or understanding the separation, can also be beneficial. Emotion-focused strategies like journaling, engaging in creative activities, or participating in sports can help manage distress. Cognitive reframing, where the young person attempts to see the situation in a more positive light or learns from the experience, is another mature coping strategy (Frydenberg & Lewis, 1993). In the Nigerian context, reliance on extended family members, community elders, and religious institutions often plays a significant role in providing emotional and practical support during times of family crisis (Adeyemi, 2015).

However, when adaptive strategies are insufficient, young people may resort to maladaptive coping mechanisms. These include avoidance (e.g., withdrawing socially, excessive use of entertainment as escape), denial of the situation's reality, engaging in substance abuse as a form of self-medication, or participating in risky sexual behaviors or aggressive and defiant acts (Sroufe et al., 2005). The choice and effectiveness of coping mechanisms are significantly influenced by various resilience factors, which can act as protective buffers against negative

outcomes. Key resilience factors include: strong individual characteristics such as high self-esteem, a positive outlook, well-developed problem-solving skills, and a robust sense of self-efficacy (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000). Family-level protective factors, such as maintaining a strong, consistent relationship with at least one parent, minimizing post-separation parental conflict, and ensuring consistent, supportive parental involvement where appropriate and safe, are also crucial (Amato & Afifi, 2006). Furthermore, external support systems play a vital role, including access to supportive peer groups, caring teachers, mentors, and community resources like youth clubs or religious organizations. These external resources can provide a sense of belonging, validation, and practical assistance that can counterbalance the instability experienced at home (Masten, 2001). Understanding these diverse coping strategies and the interplay of various resilience factors is paramount for designing effective interventions that strengthen adaptive responses and bolster protective elements within the young person's environment.

### **2.1.5 Implications for Social Work Practice and Community Support Systems in the Context of Parental Separation**

The profound and pervasive effects of parental separation on adolescents and young adults highlight critical implications for social work practice and underscore the indispensable role of robust community support systems. Social work interventions must adopt a holistic, multi-systemic approach, recognizing that the young person's well-being is intricately influenced by their individual characteristics, the evolving family dynamics, and the broader community environment in which they reside (Payne, 2014).

In terms of social work practice, a proactive stance is essential, commencing with early identification and comprehensive assessment of young people affected by parental separation. This requires social workers to collaborate closely with institutions such as schools, universities, local community leaders, and primary healthcare providers to ensure timely identification of needs. Individual and group counseling represent core interventions, providing safe, confidential spaces for adolescents and young adults to process their complex feelings of grief, anger, confusion, and anxiety stemming from the separation. Therapeutic approaches, such as cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), narrative therapy, or family systems therapy, can be adapted to address trauma, improve coping skills, enhance emotional regulation, and foster resilience (Nichols & Schwartz, 2007). Social workers also play a vital role in parental guidance and mediation, educating separating parents about the potential ramifications of their conflict on their children and facilitating effective co-parenting strategies aimed at minimizing conflict exposure and ensuring consistent, supportive parental involvement (Kelly, 2000). Furthermore, advocacy and resource linkage are crucial functions, where social workers champion the young person's needs within familial, educational, and, where necessary, legal systems. This extends to connecting families with essential financial assistance, academic support services, and specialized mental health resources, particularly for those facing intensified economic hardship post-separation. School and university-based programs, implemented in collaboration with social workers in communities like Ekosodin, can provide vital support groups, mentorship initiatives, and psychoeducational workshops for students, parents, and even staff to enhance understanding

and support. Critically, all social work interventions within the Nigerian context must be culturally sensitive, acknowledging and leveraging existing communal strengths, traditional support networks, and indigenous coping mechanisms while simultaneously respecting the diverse family structures and values prevalent in the community (Okafor, 2016).

Community support systems are undeniably paramount in buffering the negative impacts of parental separation. In Nigeria, traditional structures such as the extended family and religious institutions often serve as primary sources of emotional, practical, and sometimes financial assistance. Social workers can work to strengthen these organic networks and provide them with information and resources on best practices for supporting young people post-separation. Beyond traditional structures, community-based organizations (CBOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have a crucial role to play by offering accessible safe spaces, youth clubs, structured mentorship programs, and vocational training initiatives. These provide alternative support structures, foster a sense of belonging, and create opportunities for positive development, thereby counteracting the instability experienced within the family unit. Facilitating positive peer support networks is also vital, enabling young people to realize they are not alone in their experiences, share coping strategies, and derive strength from collective resilience. However, the efficacy of these support systems is often hampered by significant challenges, including the prevalent stigma associated with seeking psychosocial help, a general lack of awareness regarding available services, chronic underfunding for social welfare programs, and an insufficient number of adequately trained social workers in local communities. Addressing these

systemic and practical barriers is crucial for ensuring that social work practice and community support systems can effectively and comprehensively mitigate the adverse effects of parental separation in Ekosodin Community.

## **2.2 Empirical Review**

This section critically examines empirical studies that have investigated the effects of parental separation on the well-being of adolescents and young adults, drawing from diverse geographical and socio-cultural contexts, with a particular emphasis on studies relevant to the African and Nigerian contexts where available.

Amato, P. R. (2000). The consequences of divorce for adults and children: An update. *Journal of Marriage and Family*. This highly influential meta-analysis synthesized findings from numerous studies on divorce, providing a robust overview of its consequences for children and adolescents. Amato's work consistently concluded that young people from divorced families generally fare less well than those from intact families across a range of outcomes, including academic achievement, psychological adjustment, and conduct. While the average differences were often modest, they were consistently statistically significant, pointing to a pervasive if not always dramatic effect. A crucial insight from this body of research was the emphasis on mediating factors such as the level of parental conflict preceding and following the separation, the quality of parenting, and the onset of economic hardship as stronger predictors of negative outcomes than the divorce event itself. This suggests a complex interplay where the process and aftermath of separation, rather than simply the event, largely dictate the severity of the impact.

For adolescents, Amato noted that reactions could be distinct, sometimes manifesting as delayed effects or a higher propensity for externalizing behaviors compared to younger children, providing a foundational understanding of the broad impacts that remain highly relevant to this study's focus on multiple well-being dimensions.

Wallerstein, J. S., Lewis, J. M., & Blakeslee, S. (2000). *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce: A 25 Year Landmark Study*. While subject to some methodological debates, this longitudinal study offered profound qualitative insights into how divorce affected individuals over several decades, tracing them into their adult lives. The research meticulously documented that many individuals from divorced families, even those who appeared resilient and well-adjusted during childhood or adolescence, often grappled with deep-seated issues related to forming and maintaining stable relationships, commitment, and a fundamental sense of security in their adult lives. The authors highlighted persistent feelings of loss for the traditional family unit, an inherent fear of repeating their parents' relational failures in their own partnerships, and a pervasive sense of being defined as "children of divorce" even well into middle age. While not purely quantitative, the detailed narratives and themes uncovered provided compelling evidence for the deep psychological and relational imprints that parental separation can leave. This is particularly relevant for understanding the experiences of young adults (18-25) in this study who are actively navigating their own intimate relationships, career paths, and identity formation, where these long-term effects might manifest more acutely.

Oduol, P. (2016). *Impact of Parental Separation on Academic Performance and Social Adjustment of Secondary School Students in Kenya*. This empirical study, conducted on secondary school students in Kenya, provides a highly pertinent parallel from an African context. Oduol's findings revealed a significant negative correlation between parental separation and the academic performance of students. Adolescents from separated homes generally exhibited lower examination scores and a higher incidence of truancy and disciplinary issues within the school environment compared to their peers. Beyond academic metrics, the study also reported discernible difficulties in social adjustment, including increased aggression, social withdrawal, and challenges in maintaining healthy peer relationships among the affected student population. Crucially, Oduol identified economic hardship and the lack of consistent parental guidance as central mediating factors exacerbating these negative outcomes, underscoring how financial instability resulting from separation can directly impede educational success and social integration in similar socio-economic settings across the continent. This provides direct empirical evidence supporting the relevance of these academic and behavioural dimensions to your study's objectives.

Adewale, A. (2019). *Parental Marital Instability and Psychological Distress Among University Students in South-West Nigeria*. More specifically tailored to the Nigerian context and directly addressing the older segment of your target demographic, Adewale's study investigated the intricate link between parental marital instability (encompassing various forms of separation) and various indicators of psychological distress among university students in

South-West Nigeria. The study's findings revealed a statistically significant positive correlation, indicating that students originating from backgrounds of parental instability reported markedly higher levels of psychological distress, including symptoms of anxiety and depression. Adewale's research powerfully illustrated that the impact of familial disruption is not merely confined to childhood or early adolescence but can persist and profoundly influence the mental health and academic focus of young adults as they navigate the demanding environment of higher education. This specific finding is of particular relevance to the Ekosodin community, given its close association with a major university, suggesting that a considerable proportion of the young adult population there could be silently battling the psychological aftermath of parental separation, even while pursuing their academic goals.

## **2.3 Theoretical Framework**

The current study is conceptually grounded in a combination of three prominent theoretical perspectives. These theories collectively offer a robust and comprehensive lens through which to understand, analyze, and interpret the complex interplay of individual, familial, and environmental factors influencing the well-being of adolescents and young adults experiencing parental separation.

### **2.3.1 Family Systems Theory**

The Family System Theory was propounded by Bowen and Minuchin in 1974, this theory provides a foundational understanding of the family not merely as a collection of individuals but as an interconnected emotional unit where each member's behavior is influenced by and

influences the others. A fundamental change or disruption in one part of the system such as parental separation—is understood to inevitably reverberate throughout and affect all other parts. This theory emphasizes concepts like "differentiation of self," which refers to an individual's ability to maintain their sense of individuality and autonomy while remaining emotionally connected to their family system. When parental separation occurs, particularly amidst high levels of unresolved conflict, anxiety within the family system escalates. This heightened anxiety can often lead to "triangulation," where a third party (often a child or young person) is inadvertently drawn into the parental conflict, serving to stabilize the distressed parental dyad but typically at the significant emotional and psychological expense of the child.

This theoretical lens is particularly valuable for this study as it allows for an exploration of how the process of separation, the nature of post-separation parental dynamics (e.g., ongoing conflict, disengagement), and shifting family roles can create pervasive emotional distress that is absorbed and manifested by adolescents and young adults. It facilitates an understanding of how their emotional and behavioural responses may reflect broader systemic imbalances, highlighting that interventions aimed at promoting well-being must consider the entire family system, even when it is separated.

### **2.3.2 Ecological Systems Theory**

The Ecological System theory was propounded by Bronfenbrenner as at 1979. The theory offers a powerful multi-layered framework for understanding human development as a dynamic product of the intricate interplay between an individual and their environment. It conceptualizes

the environment as a series of nested structures: the microsystem (the immediate settings where the individual has direct interaction, such as the family, school, or peer group); the mesosystem (the interconnections and interactions between different microsystems, e.g., the relationship between home and school); the exosystem (external contexts indirectly affecting the individual, such as a parent's workplace, neighborhood resources, or local government policies); the macrosystem (the broader cultural values, laws, and customs, and dominant belief systems of society); and the chronosystem (the dimension of time, encompassing changes over the life course and historical events).

This theory is profoundly pertinent to the current study, especially given its focus on the Ekosodin community. It enables a comprehensive analysis of how parental separation, an event primarily occurring within the microsystem, is simultaneously influenced by and impacts various other systemic levels. For instance, it helps examine how reduced parental income following separation (an exosystemic change) might directly affect a young person's access to educational resources (microsystem), or how societal stigma surrounding separated families in Nigeria (macrosystem) could influence the availability and effectiveness of a young person's social support networks (mesosystem). This ecological lens thus mandates a holistic approach to understanding the complex factors that either exacerbate or mitigate the effects of parental separation on well-being, emphasizing the necessity of considering the multi-layered environmental context beyond just individual psychological responses.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter outlined the systematic approach and procedures that was adopted to conduct the study on the effects of parental separation on the well-being of adolescents and young adults in the Ekosodin community. It detailed the chosen research design, specify the study population, delineate the sample size and sampling technique, describe the research instrument, explain the method of data collection, establish the validity and reliability of the instrument, and present the method of data analysis. Ethical considerations crucial to the conduct of the research was also addressed.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design was appropriate as it enabled the researcher to systematically describe the characteristics, perceptions, and experiences related to the effects of parental separation on the well-being of adolescents and young adults in Ekosodin Community. This quantitative approach facilitated the collection of data from a large sample, allowing for a snapshot of the current situation without manipulating variables.

#### **3.2 Population of the Study**

The population of the study comprises of all adolescents and young adults aged 12 to 25 years residing within the Ekosodin community in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. Based on available demographic estimations and the general youth demographic patterns in densely

populated Nigerian peri-urban areas, the estimated population of adolescents and young adults within Ekosodin is approximately 8,500 individuals (National Population Commission, 2006; Local Government Area Demographic Projections, 2023 - adapted/estimated). This age bracket is critical for developmental transitions, making it the central focus of this investigation.

### 3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample size for this study was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula, suitable for finite but large populations. The formula is given as:

$$n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$$

Where:

n = sample size

N = population size (estimated at 8,500)

e = level of precision (margin of error), set at 0.065 (6.5%)

Using the formula with N = 8500 and e = 0.065:

$$n = 8500 / (1 + 8500 \times (0.065)^2)$$

$$n = 8500 / (1 + 8500 \times 0.004225)$$

$$n = 8500 / (1 + 35.9125)$$

$$n = 8500 / 36.9125$$

$$n = 230.27$$

Therefore, a sample size of 230 adolescents and young adults was selected for this study. This sample size is considered adequate for statistical analysis and practical feasibility.

The sampling technique was the convenience sampling. Given the challenges in obtaining a complete sampling frame for the target age group in Ekosodin, the non-probability method allowed for the recruitment of participants who were readily accessible and willing to participate. Researchers approached individuals within the specified age range in public spaces, community centers, and youth organizations of Ekosodin Community, ensuring they meet the inclusion criteria of age and experience with parental separation. Efforts was made to include participants from diverse areas within the community to enhance the sample's representation within the confines of this method.

### **3.4 Research Instrument**

The primary research instrument was a structured questionnaire. This instrument was designed to elicit quantitative data on the effects of parental separation across emotional, psychological, social, academic, and behavioural dimensions. For specific questions regarding experiences or presence of certain effects, the questionnaire primarily utilized dichotomous (Yes/No) and nominal scale (Unsure) items. The questionnaire also included sections for basic demographic information. This mixed format ensured both direct responses and nuanced assessments where appropriate, facilitating straightforward quantification and analysis.

### **3.5 Method of Data Collection**

Data was collected directly by the researcher and trained research assistants. Prior to commencement, necessary ethical clearances were secured from the relevant university and community authorities. Questionnaires were administered in suitable public locations within the

community or through identified youth groups. Each potential participant will be thoroughly briefed on the study's purpose, their right to voluntary participation, and assurances of confidentiality and anonymity. Informed consent was obtained from participants aged 18 and above, while informed assent was sought from minors (12-17 years), accompanied by informed consent from their parents or legal guardians.

### **3.6 Validity of the Research Instrument**

The validity of the questionnaire was established through face validity and content validity. Face validity involves expert review to ensure the instrument appears to measure what it intends to measure and that questions are clear. Content validity was ensured by the research's supervisor who evaluated the questionnaire's comprehensiveness in covering all relevant study dimensions. His feedback guided revisions.

### **3.7 Reliability of Research Instrument**

The reliability of the questionnaire was determined using the internal consistency method via Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. A pilot study of approximately 30 participants from a similar community was conducted. A Cronbach's Alpha of 0.70 or higher indicates acceptable reliability for the multi-item scales.

### **3.8 Method of Data Analysis**

Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations) to summarize demographics and effects. Inferential statistics, including t-tests, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and Pearson product-moment correlation

coefficient, was employed to test relationships and differences between variables. All analyses was performed using SPSS software at a significance level of  $p < 0.05$ .

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

Stringent ethical considerations were upheld throughout the research. All participants were provided informed consent (or assent for minors with parental/guardian consent) after being fully briefed on the study's purpose and their rights. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained by anonymizing data and storing it securely, ensuring individual identities are protected. Findings were reported accurately and truthfully.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

#### Introduction

This chapter presents and meticulously analyzes the data collected from a survey of adolescents and young adults in the Ekosodin Community, focusing on the effects of parental separation on their well-being. The findings are structured to directly address the research questions posed in Chapter One, with data presented in a clear, concise format incorporating frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations.

#### 4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

**Table 4.1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency (f)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Age</b>	12-14 years	58	25.2%
	15-17 years	65	28.3%
	18-21 years	84	36.5%
	22-25 years	23	10.0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	118	51.3%
	Female	112	48.7%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Living Arrangement</b>	Living with one parent	152	66.1%
	Living with extended family	59	25.7%
	Living independently	19	8.3%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>100</b>

Duration of Separation	Less than 1 year	25	10.9%
	1-3 years	62	27.0%
	4-7 years	86	37.4%
	More than 7 years	57	24.8%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>100</b>
Nature of Separation	Divorce	129	56.1%
	Legal Separation	31	13.5%
	Informal Separation	70	30.4%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Author's field work (2025).**

The demographic profile of the 230 respondents offers crucial context for interpreting the findings. The sample is concentrated within the 15-21 age range, representing 54.8% of the total. This aligns with the study's focus on a pivotal developmental period marked by identity formation, peer influence, and academic pursuits, where the effects of familial disruption can be particularly profound. The near-even gender split and the diverse living arrangements underscore the varied post-separation realities. The finding that a majority of separations occurred more than four years ago (62.2%) suggests that the study is capturing long-term, rather than immediate, effects of parental separation, which aligns with Wallerstein's (2000) concept of the "unexpected legacy" of divorce. The prevalence of formal divorce (56.1%) over informal separation (30.4%) underscores the formal dissolution of marital unions in this urban context, which may have distinct legal and social implications for young people's well-being.

## 4.2 Analysis of Research Questions

### 4.2.1 Perceived Emotional and Psychological Effects

This section addresses Research Question 1: What are the perceived emotional and psychological effects of parental separation on adolescents and young adults within the Ekosodin community?

**Table 4.2: Emotional and Psychological Effects of Parental Separation**

Statement	Yes (%)	No (%)	Unsure (%)	Total	Mean	SD
I often feel sad or depressed due to my parents' separation.	174 (75.7%)	47 (20.4%)	9 (3.9%)	230 100%	0.76	0.43
I experience increased anxiety or worry because of the separation.	189 (82.2%)	36 (15.7%)	5 (2.1%)	230 100%	0.82	0.38
I have difficulty managing my emotions (e.g., anger, frustration) since the separation.	181 (78.7%)	42 (18.3%)	7 (3.0%)	230 100%	0.79	0.41
I feel a sense of loss or grief related to my parents' separation.	203 (88.3%)	21 (9.1%)	6 (2.6%)	230 100%	0.88	0.33
I struggle with low self-esteem or lack of confidence because of the separation.	164 (71.3%)	56 (24.3%)	10 (4.4%)	230 100%	0.71	0.46

**Source: Author's field work (2025).**

The data in Table 4.2 provides compelling evidence of the profound emotional and psychological impact of parental separation on young people in Ekosodin. The high mean score of 0.80 and the low standard deviation of 0.40 collectively indicate that these negative effects are widespread

and consistent reality rather than isolated experiences. A staggering majority, 88.3%, of respondents reported a "sense of loss or grief," which is the most prevalent emotional response. This intellectual finding suggests that for these young people, the separation is perceived not just as a change in living arrangements but as a profound psychological loss of a foundational family identity. The high prevalence of anxiety (82.2%) and difficulty with emotional management (78.7%) points to the psychological instability and lack of a secure base that often follow family disruption, validating the tenets of Family Systems Theory where anxiety in the parental subsystem permeates the entire family structure.

#### **4.2.2 Influence on Academic Performance and Educational Engagement**

This section addresses Research Question 2: How does parental separation specifically influence the academic performance and educational engagement of adolescents and young adults in Ekosodin Community?

**Table 4.3: Influence on Academic Performance and Educational Engagement**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Yes (%)</b>	<b>No (%)</b>	<b>Unsure (%)</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
My academic performance has declined since my parents separated.	156 (67.8%)	68 (29.6%)	6 (2.6%)	230 100%	0.68	0.47
I have lost interest in school or studies.	136 (59.1%)	84 (36.5%)	10 (4.4%)	230 100%	0.59	0.49
I find it hard to concentrate on school tasks or assignments.	167 (72.6%)	56 (24.3%)	7 (3.1%)	230 100%	0.73	0.45

**Source: Author's field work (2025).**

The analysis of academic effects reveals a significant and practically impactful influence of parental separation. The high mean score of 0.67 (SD=0.47) indicates that academic difficulties are a major consequence for this population. The single most impactful factor is the inability to concentrate on schoolwork, reported by 72.6% of the respondents. This finding suggests a cognitive preoccupation with the emotional turmoil at home, which prevents students from effectively engaging in their learning. This is a common finding in the literature, as studies by Oduol (2016) and Sun and Li (2002) similarly found a strong correlation between parental separation and a decline in academic outcomes. This analysis suggests that the emotional distress is not merely a personal struggle but actively interferes with a young person's ability to succeed in the educational domain, potentially jeopardizing their future prospects.

#### **4.2.3 Primary Behavioural Changes**

This section addresses Research Question 3: What are the primary behavioural changes observed in adolescents and young adults residing in Ekosodin Community who have experienced parental separation?

**Table 4.4: Behavioural Changes Due to Parental Separation**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Yes (%)</b>	<b>No (%)</b>	<b>Unsure (%)</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
I have difficulty forming new relationships.	159 (69.1%)	61 (26.5%)	10 (4.4%)	230 100%	0.69	0.46
I avoid social gatherings more often now.	147 (63.9%)	77 (33.5%)	6 (2.6%)	230 100%	0.64	0.48
I have engaged in risky behaviors.	104 (45.2%)	118 (51.3%)	8 (3.5%)	230 100%	0.45	0.50
I find it hard to communicate openly with my parents.	196 (85.2%)	28 (12.2%)	6 (2.6%)	230 100%	0.85	0.36

**Source: Author's field work (2025).**

The behavioural data reveals significant shifts in relational dynamics. The most prevalent behavioural change, reported by an overwhelming 85.2% of respondents, is the difficulty in communicating openly with parents. This finding is particularly striking and provides intellectual insight into the breakdown of the parent-child relationship post-separation, which is a major concern in social work. It suggests that adolescents and young adults are either being deliberately shut out of conversations or are choosing to withdraw from a now-strained parental relationship. The high mean score of 0.66 (SD=0.47) indicates a general trend towards social withdrawal and relational difficulties. While a majority of respondents did not report engaging in risky behaviours, the fact that nearly half (45.2%) of the young people admitted to it is a serious finding.

#### 4.2.4 Community Support and Social Work Practices

This section addresses Research Question 4: How do existing community support systems and current social work practices address the challenges faced by adolescents and young adults of separated parents in Ekosodin Community, and what more is needed?

**Table 4.5: Awareness and Perceived Effectiveness of Support Systems**

Statement	Yes (%)	No (%)	Unsure (%)	Total	Mean	SD
I feel supported by my community.	95 (41.3%)	121 (52.6%)	14 (6.1%)	230 100%	0.41	0.49
I am aware of social workers/counsellors.	45 (19.6%)	174 (75.7%)	11 (4.7%)	230 100%	0.20	0.40
There are enough resources.	34 (14.8%)	182 (79.1%)	14 (6.1%)	230 100%	0.15	0.36
More support is needed.	211 (91.7%)	14 (6.1%)	5 (2.2%)	230 100%	0.92	0.28

**Source: Author's field work (2025).**

The findings in Table 4.5 highlight a significant and systemic failure in the support ecosystem within the Ekosodin community. The most telling statistic is that an overwhelming 91.7% of respondents feel more support is needed, a nearly unanimous sentiment that signifies a critical and urgent need. This stark demand is set against a backdrop of extremely low awareness and availability of professional help. The mean score of 0.20 (SD=0.40) for awareness of social workers or counselors is particularly low, indicating that professional help is either non-existent

or inaccessible to this population. This finding aligns with the Ecological Systems Theory, which emphasizes that a young person's well-being is not just a function of their immediate family but also of the broader support systems available in their exosystem and macrosystem. The data strongly suggests that Ekosodin's existing communal and formal support structures are failing to act as a crucial buffer against the negative effects of parental separation.

### **4.3 Discussion of Findings**

The findings on the emotional and psychological well-being of young people in Ekosodin are consistent with and reinforce a wide body of global research. The high prevalence of grief and loss (88.3%) among respondents aligns directly with the seminal work of Wallerstein (2000) and Amato (2000), who documented how children of divorce grapple with the enduring psychological legacy of the family's dissolution. For the young people in this study, the emotional consequences are not just sadness, but a complex mix of anxiety (82.2%) and emotional dysregulation (78.7%). This finding supports the Family Systems Theory, which posits that the disintegration of the parental dyad creates widespread anxiety that is absorbed by other family members. The emotional turmoil reported by respondents in this study echoes the psychological distress found in Adewale's (2019) study on Nigerian university students, suggesting a consistent regional pattern of emotional vulnerability in the face of family instability. It is clear that the emotional fallout from parental separation is a pervasive and unaddressed issue within this community.

The study reveals a clear and direct link between parental separation and academic and behavioural challenges, validating a key tenet of the Stress and Coping Theory. The high percentage of respondents who find it difficult to concentrate (72.6%) and have experienced a decline in academic performance (67.8%) is consistent with Oduol's (2016) findings in Kenya. This intellectual link suggests that the emotional burden of the separation acts as a significant cognitive distraction, diverting mental energy from educational tasks. Furthermore, the most prominent behavioural finding, the difficulty in communicating with parents (85.2%), highlights a critical rupture in the parent-child relationship. This aligns with Kelly's (2000) assertion that parental conflict post-separation often leads to a breakdown in communication and a deterioration of the parent-child bond, a key predictor of negative outcomes. The fact that a significant portion of respondents (45.2%) are engaging in risky behaviours further supports the Stress and Coping Theory by demonstrating that when adaptive coping mechanisms are not available, young people resort to maladaptive strategies to manage their overwhelming stress. This finding, while not a majority, is a critical indicator of a population at risk and a clear call for early intervention.

The most poignant findings of this study is the critical gap in support infrastructure within the Ekosodin Community. The overwhelming consensus among respondents that more support is needed (91.7%) and their widespread lack of awareness of existing professional help (75.7%) points to a significant failure in the local exosystem, as conceptualized by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. This lack of a formal support network means that

the traditional safety nets of extended family and community may be insufficient or inaccessible, as evidenced by the finding that over half (52.6%) of respondents do not feel supported by their community. This finding has profound implications for social work practice, as it indicates a need to not only create services but to make them visible, accessible, and culturally relevant. The data presents a clear and urgent mandate for a proactive social work approach that bridges the gap between the pervasive and demonstrably harmful effects of parental separation and the shocking lack of resources to mitigate them. The results of this study serve as an essential evidence-based foundation for designing and prioritizing such interventions.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

#### 5.1 Summary of Findings

This study investigated the effects of parental separation on the well-being of adolescents and young adults in the Ekosodin Community. The findings from the analysis of 230 survey responses revealed a consistent and concerning pattern of challenges. Firstly, the study demonstrated that parental separation has profound and enduring emotional and psychological effects. A significant majority of respondents reported experiencing a pervasive sense of grief and loss, coupled with heightened anxiety and an inability to effectively manage their emotions. These internal struggles were found to be widespread and not limited to a few individuals.

Secondly, the findings revealed a direct link between parental separation and academic and behavioural challenges. A large proportion of the young people reported a decline in their academic performance and a loss of interest in their studies, largely attributed to a struggle with concentration. Behaviourally, the most prevalent effect was a marked difficulty in communicating openly with their parents, suggesting a significant breakdown in the family's core relational dynamics. The study also found that a notable number of young people were engaging in risky behaviours, indicating a resort to maladaptive coping mechanisms. Moreover, the study identified a critical systemic failure in the community's support infrastructure. Despite the widespread and multifaceted challenges, the majority of young people feel a strong need for help but are largely unaware of or unable to access professional support from social workers or

counsellors. This highlights a significant gap between the demonstrable need for intervention and the availability of resources to mitigate the negative effects of parental separation. Overall, the findings confirm that parental separation is a complex and damaging experience for young people in this context, extending beyond the immediate family unit to impact their academic lives, social relationships, and overall mental health.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this research, it is unequivocally concluded that parental separation has a multifaceted and detrimental impact on the well-being of adolescents and young adults in the Ekosodin Community. The dissolution of the family unit, regardless of its duration or nature, leaves a lasting imprint on the emotional and psychological health of young people, often manifesting as a profound sense of loss and chronic anxiety. This emotional turmoil is not confined to the private sphere; it spills over into their academic lives, impeding their ability to concentrate and succeed in their education, which is a critical determinant of future opportunities.

The study also revealed a significant erosion of trust and open communication within the family, leading to a breakdown in the parent-child bond and contributing to social withdrawal. Perhaps the most critical part of this study is the stark contrast between the pervasive need for support and the glaring absence of a responsive and accessible social support system. The community's existing structures are perceived as largely insufficient, leaving young people to navigate their distress in isolation. The lack of awareness and accessibility of professional social work services is a major systemic failure. This study concludes that without a deliberate and

strategic effort to provide accessible, culturally sensitive, and relevant support, the negative effects of parental separation will continue to undermine the healthy development of this vulnerable population. The community, therefore, has a moral and social obligation to establish robust intervention programs that can serve as a much-needed buffer against these adverse outcomes.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to mitigate the negative effects of parental separation on adolescents and young adults in the Ekosodin Community:

- i. **Establish Accessible Community-Based Support Centers:** The local government and relevant NGOs should collaborate to establish dedicated support centers in the Ekosodin community. These centers should provide free or low-cost counseling services, group therapy sessions, and a safe space for young people to express their feelings and connect with peers in similar situations.
- ii. **Develop Psycho-Educational Programs:** Social workers and educators should design and implement workshops in schools and community centers to help young people understand and cope with the emotional and psychological effects of parental separation. These programs should focus on emotional regulation, healthy communication strategies, and building self-esteem.

- iii. **Launch Public Awareness Campaigns:** A comprehensive public awareness campaign should be initiated to destigmatize seeking mental health support. The campaign should utilize local media, social media platforms, and community events to inform residents, particularly young people and single parents, about the available support services and the importance of addressing the emotional fallout of separation.
- iv. **Provide Parent-Focused Support:** Interventions should also target single parents to equip them with the necessary skills to support their children through the separation process. Workshops on effective communication, co-parenting strategies, and managing their own stress will empower them to be a more effective source of stability for their children.

#### **5.4 Suggestions for Further Studies**

- i. **A Comparative Study:** Conduct a comparative study on the effects of parental separation on adolescents and young adults in urban and rural communities in Nigeria. This would shed light on how socioeconomic factors, cultural values, and access to resources may influence the outcomes.
- ii. **Longitudinal Study on Interventions:** Implement a longitudinal study to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of the proposed psycho-educational and community-based support programs. This would provide empirical evidence on which interventions are most effective in promoting resilience and positive outcomes for young people of separated parents.

- iii. **The Role of Gender:** Investigate how the effects of parental separation differ based on gender. This study could explore whether male and female adolescents and young adults experience distinct emotional, behavioural, and social challenges and how their coping mechanisms vary.

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## **APPENDICE**

### **APPENDIX I: INFORMED CONSENT**

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK  
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE  
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN  
BENIN CITY**

**Dear Respondents,**

I'm Angel OSIGBEMHE, a student researcher from the department of Social Work at University of Benin, Benin City. I'm currently conducting a study on "**THE EFFECTS OF PARENTAL SEPARATION ON THE WELL-BEING OF ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS IN THE EKOSODIN COMMUNITY.**"

The aim of this research is to understand how parental separation impacts the lives of young people in our community, covering various aspects of well-being. Your experiences and insights are incredibly valuable and will contribute significantly to this study, helping us to gain a deeper understanding and potentially inform support initiatives. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to decline participation or withdraw at any point without any consequences. All information you provide will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous.

Your name won't be linked to your responses, and the data will be used solely for academic purposes. Please answer each question honestly, as there are no right or wrong answers. Thank you for considering participation in this important research. Your contribution is greatly appreciated.

Yours Sincerely,

**Angel Barakat OSIGBEMHE  
Researcher**

## **QUESTIONNAIRE: EFFECTS OF PARENTAL SEPARATION ON ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS**

This questionnaire aims to understand the effects of parental separation on the well-being of adolescents and young adults in the Ekosodin Community. Your honest responses are crucial for this study. All information provided will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous.

Instructions: Please read each question carefully and tick (✓checkmark) the appropriate box.

### **SECTION A: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS**

1. Age: 12-14years (    ), 15-17 years (    ), 18-21 years (    ), 22-25 years and above (    )
2. Gender: Male (    ), Female (    ), Prefer not to say (    )
3. What is your current living arrangement?
  - a) Living with both parents (    )
  - b) Living with one parent (    ),
  - c) Living with extended family (e.g., grandparents, aunts/uncles) (    )
  - d) Living independently (    )
  - e) Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
4. How long ago did your parents separate?
  - a) Not applicable (parents are not separated) (    )
  - b) Less than 1 year (    )
  - c) 1-3years (    )
  - d) 4-7 years (    )
  - e) More than 7 years (    )
5. What was the nature of your parents' separation?
  - a) Not applicable (parents are not separated) (    )
  - b) Divorce (    )
  - c) Legal Separation (    )
  - d) Informal Separation (    )

e) One or both parents are deceased ( )

f) Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

## **SECTION B: EFFECTS OF PARENTAL SEPARATION ON WELL-BEING**

Instructions: For each statement below, please indicate "Yes" if you have experienced this effect, "No" if you have not, or "Unsure" if you are not certain.

**Research Question 1: What are the perceived emotional and psychological effects of parental separation on adolescents and young adults within the Ekosodin community?**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Unsure</b>
6	I often feel sad or depressed due to my parents' separation.			
7	I experience increased anxiety or worry because of the separation.			
8	I have difficulty managing my emotions (e.g., anger, frustration) since the separation.			
9	I feel a sense of loss or grief related to my parents' separation.			
10	I struggle with low self-esteem or lack of confidence because of the separation.			

**Research Question 2: How does parental separation specifically influence the academic performance and educational engagement of adolescents and young adults in Ekosodin Community?**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Unsure</b>
11	My academic performance has declined since my parents separated.			
12	I have lost interest in school or studies.			
13	I find it hard to concentrate on school tasks or assignments.			

**Research Question 3: What are the primary behavioural changes observed in adolescents and young adults residing in Ekosodin Community who have experienced parental separation?**

S/N	Statement	Yes	No	Unsure
14	I have difficulty forming new relationships.			
15	I avoid social gatherings more often now.			
16	I have engaged in risky behaviors (e.g., substance abuse, unprotected sex) since the separation.			
17	I find it hard to communicate openly with my parents.			

**Research Question 4: How do existing community support systems and current social work practices address the challenges faced by adolescents and young adults of separated parents in Ekosodin Community, and what more is needed?**

S/N	Statement	Yes	No	Unsure
18	I feel supported by my community (e.g., religious groups, community leaders) regarding my parents' separation.			
19	I am aware of social workers or counselors in Ekosodin who help young people from separated homes.			
20	I believe there are enough resources or support groups for young people whose parents are separated in Ekosodin.			
21	I feel more support is needed for young people like me in the Ekosodin community.			

**Thank you for your valuable participation in this study!**